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THE KINGDOM AND THE KING

II—ACCORDING TO JOHN

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Being a Revised Edition of
"Studies in the Gospel of St. John"

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"FOR THE FAITH," ETC.

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NOTE

This little book is the re-issue of a previous book, *Studies in the Gospel of St. John*, shortened, considerably altered, and brought into the same form, for the same kind of use, with the studies in Luke, which have the same title, and are Part I, of which this is Part II. The book in its original form has been out of print for several years.

THE KINGDOM AND THE KING
II—ACCORDING TO JOHN

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

THE subject of our study is the fourth and latest of the four pamphlets which form the primary literature of our Faith. It is the unique within the unique. There is nothing like the *Four* in all literature, and of those no other is like the *Fourth.*

1. There is the interest which attaches to its authorship. A book bearing the name—even as a mere tradition—of the "beloved disciple," must be of deep interest to any Christian, and there is besides, all the critical debate which has attached itself to that tradition. Closely allied with the problem of authorship is the problem of its distinctiveness. Questions crowd upon the least scholarly reader in this connection. Why so great a difference? Does this author really treat of the same Person as the Synoptists? Is the essential character of Jesus the same? Did the Speaker of those radiantly human parables of Matthew and Luke speak upon other occasions in terms of pure mysticism, and did he consent at some period of his ministry to an incessant

war of words such as is recorded in the central division of this book ?

Or, again, Is the Fourth Gospel in any real sense biographical, or is it a philosophical treatise which the author has associated with a situation more or less historical in order to simplify his statement of his conception of Christian thought ?

2. But there is a far greater interest in the book than the interest which it calls forth in the critical student. The book is a *world's book*. Its author was a Jew, and conscious of all Jewish thought ; he was a Christian and knew both Synoptic and Pauline thought ; he was a man of his day and affected by contemporary thought, which was Greek. But what impresses us most is the large human appeal of the book. The author knew the world's longings and the world's need, and wrote for the world's acceptance. His Jesus starts from the narrow sphere of a decadent Jewish provincialism ; but after the introductory chapters of the book (i.–iv.), there is no limitation whether of Person or Message. The Samaritans say at the close of that passage, " He is indeed the Saviour of the world " ; and those of us who have had any measure of contact with the modern world know that even to-day this Gospel presents a quite unique appeal. This author knows and loves his race. His characters are living men and women. How unerringly, in fewest possible words, he introduces Andrew and Nathanael, Simon son of John, and Thomas, Martha and Mary !—they are our acquaintances as well as his ; they might well be British, or Indian, or Chinese, they might be of the middle ages,

or of our own day; because they are true men and women. And the central Figure who moves with so assured a dignity from the beginning, through the months of conflict, and on to the tragic end, is not perhaps so familiar as the Jesus of St. Luke, but he is none the less the Son of Man, the Man of the World.

Another illustration of its universality is its language. Big universal words literally leap to meet us from its pages; words which have been through all time the symbols of the primary demands of humanity: 'Bread,' 'Water,' 'Love,' 'Life,' 'Light,' 'Truth.'

Further, if there be truth in the saying that 'that which decides the vitality of any book' is precisely that which decides the vitality of any soul, not the knowledge it contains but simply the attitude it assumes towards the universe, unseen as well as seen," then assuredly this is the most vital of books. For St. John begins at the very Centre, and, greatly daring, he carries Central Being down into the lowly and even the sordid paths of our earthly life, without for one moment lowering the standard. The Jesus of Cana and Bethsaida and Jerusalem is, for him, from beginning to end, the very Centre of the Centre of the Universe of God.

3. This small book has represented throughout the Christian centuries the Most Holy Place of Christian thought and experience. It is our instinct metaphorically to take the shoes from off our feet in reverence when we take it up as a study. The Being Whom St. John introduces to us is holy, and the words which he speaks are holy; the saints of our

Faith have become holy as they have lived upon its teaching; and they have called it in passionate devotion, 'The Gospel of Love,' 'The Gospel of Eternity,' 'The Heart of God.'

4. It is emphatically a book with a purpose. In this connection note the manner of the writer. He never loses sight of his purpose, never loses his thread; he is never beguiled from the severity of his self-restraint by the immense store of material from which he could have drawn; he writes sufficient for the elucidation of his purpose, and he will not multiply words 'that his readers may believe.' The concentration of the book is one of its notable characteristics.

5. It is not a Life of Jesus Christ. It is not a series of reminiscences felt by the author to be too precious to be lost. Neither is it a supplementary record of facts, events, or addresses, written to complete the already published narratives.

The Subject is THE WORD OF GOD. A word is the thought of one mind expressed in such wise as that another mind can grasp it. The Jesus of the book is, so St. John contends, *The Thought of the Mind of God expressed in such wise as that human minds can grasp it.* And the purpose of the book is a double one.

(*a*) He wishes to produce in the mind of his readers the conviction that his contention is true. The claim is stupendous. It is difficult for us to whom those first words of the Prologue have been familiar from childhood to realise their boldness. If we try to imagine them as the introduction to the biography of

any man—of Isaiah, or Confucius, or Gautama, or Plato, or St. Paul—we shall gain some faint idea of their startling effect upon a first reading.

The author sets himself to make good his contention: he says that Jesus gave unmistakable proofs himself. These he describes as "signs."

He says that the personal followers of Jesus had glimpses of a God-like glory which could not be entirely hidden.

He brings forward in addition a succession of 'witnesses,' friendly and otherwise, who are said to prove his great assertion.

It was hard to believe. It was beyond all imagination, all reason, that if God should indeed express His mind in a word it should spell—as one witness said—'Jesus, of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' Yet our author writes the simple story, in utter simplicity, with the perfect assurance of one who *knows*. 'We have believed and know,' said Peter. This is the attitude of the book from first to last.

(*b*) But the aim is not ultimately the conviction of the mind; the book is an appeal to heart and will. Conviction that Jesus is the Supreme Message of God to our race is bound to produce a certain effect upon each person convinced. A constantly recurring note of the book is that no man or woman ever came into contact with Jesus without being compelled to side with or against him. Neutrality towards him seemed to be impossible. This was inevitable if John's claim was a true claim.

6. Clearly, this is not a book which can be studied in a few weeks or months; it calls for a life study in

those who wish to penetrate into its inner meanings. Here if anywhere we experience what Dr. Ker called 'the manifoldness and endlessness' of the Gospels. It is necessary that we should define quite clearly the scope and the limits of these Notes.

(1) We are compelled to use a selective method. Our studies will be study-meditations *in*, not a study *of* John's Gospel.

(2) It has seemed wise to omit all reference to problems of criticism, not only because anything which might be said must be at third or fourth hand, but because the power and the vital importance of this book come to us from the vitality of its contents, whoever its author, whatever its date.

(3) It can be nothing further than an attempt to pass on some impression of the message of the book as it has 'found' one reader. The end which we shall keep in view throughout will be fellowship with its author, whose fellowship assuredly was with Jesus himself. For we are all conscious that this is the chief aim of Biblical study, that we find the true Christ—outside of ourselves, historically, as in the three elementary Gospels; within and around ourselves spiritually, as here. If John's message 'finds us,' we can await the results of research in trust and patience. Our mood meantime may express itself wisely in Shairp's beautiful lines.

I have a life in Christ to live,
But ere I live it must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this or that book's date?

I have a life in Christ to live,
  I have a death in Christ to die,
And must I wait till science give
  All doubts a full reply?

Nay, rather, while the sea of doubt
  Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life, and death, and sin,
  Let me but creep within
The fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
  Take but the lowest seat,
And hear Thy awful voice repeat
In gentlest accents heavenly sweet
    'Come unto Me and rest;
      Believe Me and be blest.'

(4) Out of many possible selective methods one had to be chosen, and these studies have been divided according to the following central lines of thought:—

I. The Word Himself.

How he introduced himself, and claimed to reveal Fatherliness in God by the revelation of Sonliness in himself.

II. The Challenge or Appeal of the Word.

How sonliness is the true human character, and how the character may be attained.

III. The Result.

How the Person and the Challenge were met. In this view the book is a parable of human minds and

hearts, the tentative feeling out after God in some, the instinctive recoil from any interference with independence in others.

Speak, Lord, for Thy servants hear. Grant us ears to hear, eyes to see, wills to obey, hearts to love; then declare what Thou wilt, command what Thou wilt, demand what Thou wilt. Amen.

THE PROLOGUE

'All thou dost enumerate
Of power and beauty in the world,
The mightiness of love was curled
Inextricably round about.
Love lay within it and without,
To clasp thee—but in vain. Thy soul
Still shrunk from Him that made the whole,
Still set deliberate aside
His love!—Now take love! Well betide
Thy tardy conscience.'

BROWNING.

prepared for sonhood. No father can say to his boy, in the full sense of the words, 'My son,' until he is old enough and wise enough to know something of his mind, and can talk with him freely; when the spirit of sonhood has been evolved within the child, the father may say, 'My son, let us . . .'

Man was intended for this divine vocation within the family of God. For long he failed of it; he failed to desire it.

The estrangement which took the place of love was never upon the side of the Father. 'God loved the world,' and God gave to the world, a Son. True Sonhood, true Sonliness, came to the rescue, visible in a human sonhood. The Word became Flesh.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us think of the meaning of the words *grace* and *truth* as they may have been associated in this writer's mind with the character of Jesus (i. 14, 17).

'Oh, may Thy infinite goodness engage us to love Thee, and Thy blessed love prepare us to enjoy Thee.'

PART I

THE WORD BECOME FLESH

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PART I

THE WORD BECOME FLESH

SECTION I.—EARLY GLIMPSES AND IMPRESSIONS

(Chapters i.–iv.)

DESIDERIUM

'My spirit longs for Thee
Within my troubled breast,
Though I unworthy be
Of so Divine a Guest.

Of so Divine a Guest
Unworthy though I be,
Yet has my heart no rest
Unless it come from Thee.

Unless it come from Thee
In vain I look around;
In all that I can see
No rest is to be found.

No rest is to be found
But in Thy blessed love;
O! let my wish be crowned
And send it from above.'

I. Character Studies.

Andrew. He first findeth his own brother Simon (i. 35–40).

Nathanael. 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' . . . 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel' (i. 43–49).

Mary. 'They have no wine.' 'Whatsoever he sayeth to you, do it' (ii. 1–8).

Nicodemus. The same came to Jesus by night (iii. 1, 2).

John. 'The friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly because of his voice. This my joy is fulfilled' (iii. 29).

The Samaritan Woman. 'Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?' (iv. 29).

The nobleman. 'Sir, come down ere my child die' . . . The man believed the word that Jesus had said and went his way (iv. 46–50).

Notes.

1. The sphere in which Jesus moved was very limited. We find him in four centres only, the greatest distances being within seventy miles. The people who surrounded him were Jews, the Samaritan villagers being hardly an exception. The sphere of thought was entirely Jewish.

2. The narrative although much compressed is strikingly graphic, and the human interest is strong. Read, for example, i. 35–42. We seem to see the Baptist with his two young followers beside him and to overhear the exclamation which they overheard, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' We understand perfectly all that followed: their eager glance after Jesus 'as he walked,' their hasty movement towards him; his turning upon hearing footsteps with the polite inquiry, 'What seek ye?' and the touch of awkwardness in their counter question, 'Rabbi, where dwellest thou?' Our thoughts turn back instinctively to the deserted Master, and we can almost hear that great self-effacing soul murmur to himself, 'He must increase; I must decrease.'

3. Although there is no formal characterisation of the men and women who came into contact with Jesus

during those months, we instinctively characterise them. John, the great preacher of righteousness, humbly pointing from himself towards the Other (i. 19–34, iii. 22–36); the group of earnest young patriots from the country; Simon the son of John, bearing as best he might the tense moment of pause while Jesus looked into his eyes. The whole long story which was to follow, of passionate devotion, but grievous failure on the one side, of grace and faithfulness upon the other, seems to be prefigured in that look as well as in the words, 'Thou shalt be called Cephas.'

'I only knew He named my name.'

Nathanael the mystic, first alone under the fig-tree, then incredulous of Philip's very unconvincing apologetic yet drawn both by his inward longing and by the strong conviction of his friend. 'I saw thee,' said Jesus. Into those words the seeker read not only response to that which had drawn him to a place alone—that had been a small matter—but a response full and satisfying to every part of the appeal of his moments of high aspiration. His spirit leapt to meet this man with a confession the full force of which even himself could not have understood; and it is not wonderful that to him was given the promise of the vision of the mystic ladder. Heaven was very near Nathanael, for the pure in heart see God. Sharp, probably intentional contrast meets us in Nicodemus of the Sanhedrim, who came using the official 'We,' prepared to make courteous admissions, possibly after conversation to open negotiations of some sort

between the Sanhedrim and Jesus; it had not occurred to him apparently that a 'teacher from God' must be the teacher even of a teacher of Israel. Throughout the conversation we realise that he never recovered from the surprise of finding himself a mere pupil. His questions are wonderfully suggestive of a man taken at unawares. The woman of the well at Sychar, who had made shipwreck of her womanhood, who talked glibly of religion but had no sense of God, foolish and frivolous, would have repelled any other missionary than Jesus; the human interest here lies in the gradual emergence, under his friendly approach, of a self which she had almost forgotten. Last of all, both in himself and in his relation to Jesus, a wonderfully touching figure, the urgent, heart-wrung father. 'Come,' he cried. Jesus did not go; the man stood the test, risked returning to his far-away home without the physician, and completely justified Jesus' trust in him.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us read the whole passage (i. 19–iv.) for its touches of human character.

'Give perfection to beginners; give intelligence to the little ones; give aid to those who are running their course; give compunction to the negligent; give fervour of spirit to the lukewarm; give to the perfect a good consummation.'

II. The Central Figure.

'Full of grace and truth,' i. 14.

Notes.

1. Jesus himself—the name was already familiar to all readers of this book through earlier records—is the central figure. He had grown up, boy and man, in a village home. One home glimpse is given to us (ii. 1–5). A serious emergency had arisen at a wedding feast, and the mother of Jesus, evidently an intimate family friend, was told about it. She turned instinctively to her son. She told the servants to take their orders from him. There is not any touch in all the synoptic record more significant than this of the character of Jesus as known to those who knew him best: there is in it a lifetime of experience of filial resourcefulness and helpfulness, and of motherly assurance based upon it.

2. Another incidental glimpse of the impression made by Jesus upon those who knew him well is given in the testimony of his kinsman, John the Baptist, that keen student of character. 'In the midst of you standeth one . . . the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose' (cf. St. Matt. iii. 14). This, whatever further meaning we may find in it, is an expression of reverence, based upon personal acquaintance, for a certain quality of character which we describe as holiness. The kindred of Jesus knew him to be holy.

3. There was nothing apparently to mark him out from other men; he moved about freely in a

crowd of common folk; he took the young men to spend an afternoon with him in his little jungle booth; formed friendships with one and another; went to the Cana wedding; sat—a very weary traveller—on the edge of a wayside well. True, he spoke and acted with a certain quiet authority towards rulers and officers, and in the Temple of God; but he walked afoot among men, to most of them he was 'Jesus the son of Joseph.'

4. He is Jesus; and one imagines that the name has a solemn intimacy and sweetness in this passage which it had not attained in the earlier writings. This is the Jesus of the heart. 'This name 'Jesus,' fasten it so fast in thy heart that it never come out of thy thought. And when thou speakest to him, and sayest 'Jesus' through custom, it shall be in thine ears joy, in thy mouth honey, in thy heart melody.'

5. Those Jews who became the followers of Jesus believed that he was *Messiah*. 'We have found Messiah,' said Andrew. 'We have found him of Moses and the prophets,' said Philip. 'Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel,' said Nathanael, having Messianic visions before his spiritual eye. 'Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,' said the Baptist, conscious of the failure of his own moral mission, and of the need of saviourhood from without; but also reminded by the bearing of Jesus of the vision of the gentle and gracious 'Servant' who should be the true Anointed One. Before any universal claim can be put forward with any hope of its acceptance for the Jesus of the Christian

Faith, it must be shown that he is the fulfiller of the highest moral and spiritual vision of any people to whom he is introduced. Thus, he must satisfy the highest vision of ancient Egypt, of Persia, of Greece, of China, of India ; but above all he must be shown to fulfil the supreme Divine-human vision, that of the seers of Israel. The author of this book, with the whole world as he knew it consciously before him as he wrote, shows in this early passage that the men and women who met Jesus with open mind saw in him the fulfiller of their dreams, the Christ who should meet men in the region of their deepest need, 'bearing their sin'; and should lead them on to the satisfaction of their highest aspirations as Jews, should lead them back to God.

6. He is Messiah ; he is also the Word, the Logos. If this be true, this good son whon his mother trusted, this good man whom the Baptist revered, this Jesus of the exquisite passage which we have been reading, is indeed he who alone can lead us into light, making clear to us the dark mysteries of human history ; he who alone can unravel the problems which surround and baffle us ; he who alone can bring us into the Presence-chamber of God. If it be true, then the relation between this Jesus and every living being is so vital that practically no other relation exists. If it be not true, then indeed God has not yet spoken, and we who had thought that He had spoken are of all creatures the most miserable.

7. There is another symbolic title used in these chapters ; the very intimate title 'Son.' 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten son,'

the one son who lived his sonhood. If it be true, the love which could make such an offering, which could reveal itself in such a form, must indeed be in Father and son alike the Love of love.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us read the passage again (i. 19–iv.) that we may try to live ourselves into the experience of those who had those early glimpses of Jesus.

'Turn thou thy face to us, O Jesus, and keep our eyes still turned to thee. . . . Thou art our sole and absolute Lord.'

III. Jesus is himself the Touchstone of Character.

'Master, where abidest thou?' 'Come, and ye shall see' (i. 38, 39).

'Thou art Simon . . . thou shalt be called Cephas' (i. 42).

'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!' 'Whence knowest thou me?' (i. 47, 48).

Jesus did not trust himself to them . . . he himself knew what was in man (ii. 24, 25).

Notes.

1. The author of this Gospel gives his readers in these earlier chapters an opportunity of learning something concerning the mutual relations which Jesus everywhere established with those whom he met, before the conflict which so soon closed around

him rendered unbiassed judgment practically impossible.

We owe the character revelations, at some of which we have glanced, to the mutual contact between the persons concerned and Jesus. Jesus was the Touchstone of character.

2. The chief impression of Jesus himself is of friendliness and responsiveness, *within limits*. He loved to have men around Him, but he made certain very suggestive distinctions. He gave himself to the five at Bethany beyond Jordan, to Nathanael especially, with a kind of abandonment of friendship. He gave himself to the king's officer with a certain educative restraint. He gave himself to the Samaritan woman with a demand that she should rise to the gift, understand and value it, and become worthy of it. On the other hand, he withheld himself from a whole class of men who ' believed on his name, beholding the signs which he did ' (ii. 23–25); and that readers might understand clearly the motive of this reserve, John gives in detail an example of one who thus ' believed, beholding the signs.' ' Thou art a teacher from God,' said Nicodemus, ' for no man could do these signs, except God were with him (iii. 1).

3. If we enter somewhat closely into this matter we find that in his giving and withholding Jesus was applying a keen test of character, not in the first instance upon the moral plane, but upon response to something in himself. For lack of a better word, we shall call this response *rapport*. Deep in the heart of the Samaritan woman, where her better

nature still lingered, Jesus seemed to expect to find *rapport*; Herod's officer asked for a gift, and received it, but Jesus won something from him in return; Nicodemus was a good man and honest, but he had to learn a mutual language before there could be friendship. Nathanael and Jesus, Andrew and Jesus, had mutual understanding, *rapport*, we may say, before they met.

4. *Rapport* included, however, a tremendous moral demand. Gentle as was his manner, the personality of Jesus morally measured and mastered theirs. He implicitly set the standard of life and conduct for his friends. Simon must, and he will, become Cephas, at Jesus' call.

In this particular Jesus has always exerted the same influence. Wherever he is introduced he measures men, and his standard of righteous living becomes almost immediately *the* standard. His followers find themselves judged by that standard, and by no other.

For Thought and Prayer.

We have all known certain men and women who have the power of judging us, or, more accurately—since they are as a rule unconscious of their power—of making us judge ourselves. Jesus is the supreme judge of men in this sense, he judges us to this day. Let us try to discover what are the qualities which produce this power.

It is a power never self-produced, but the qualities moral and spiritual, which produce it must be infinitely worthy of attainment.

'Guide us, O Wisdom; confirm us, O Might; quicken us, O perfect Love.'

SECTION II.—THE SEVENFOLD 'I AM'

(Chapters v.–xi.)

'Christianity is the bearing upon us of a Character until we find the Character irresistible.'—CARDINAL NEWMAN.

'You shall have a Christ, a King, surety for all your incomes and all your losses.'—SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

Introductory Notes.
I am Son of the Father.
I am Son of Man.
I am the Bread of Life—Food.
I am the Light of the World—Light.
I am the Door—Liberty.
I am the good Shepherd—Guidance.
I am the Resurrection and the Life—Life.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES—I AM.

'When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as the Father taught me, I speak these things' (viii. 28).

Notes.

1. If we are justified in taking chap. v. as, in the author's plan, the beginning of a new period or phase of the study which he is making, then the saying of the Samaritan villagers (iv. 42) may be regarded as the climax of that opening passage, and the starting-point of the central passage of his study. "*We have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.*'

For although the geographical area is practically the same, moving between the Lake of Galilee and the Capital, and the audience of Jesus is still entirely Jewish, Jesus himself, according to John, passes out of Jewish, into a world-wide thought and appeal. That is to say, Jewish Messiahship here gives place to world Saviourhood. 'The Son *of Man*' (v. 27), 'The Bread of God . . . giveth life *unto the world*' (vi. 33), 'I am the Light *of the world*' (viii. 12).

2. A second note of change lies in the presentation of Jesus himself. There was from the beginning in him a certain silent assurance of rightful authority which was felt by all who met him, though, for the most part, it was they who entitled him—'*He is*' and '*Thou art.*' The foundations of the thought of this central passage lie deep in his own self-consciousness, expressed in the frequent '*I am.*'

3. A third note is the change in the moral atmosphere. We pass abruptly from happy meetings, recognitions, fellowship, idyllic in simplicity and beauty, into conditions of continual conflict. When the work of Jesus became public the Jewish Church and people had perforce to take cognisance of him, to authorise and bless, or to pronounce against him. They chose the latter course. They denied his Messiahship, and regarded as blasphemous his claim for a hearing based upon peculiar relationship with their God. We shall come to their reasons for this later on; meantime, in reading the chapters for the atmosphere, we feel that the unreasoning antagonism and violence of the Jewish leaders is constantly impressed upon us by the writer. We are led to

understand that, again and again, Jesus was rendered unable to develop his teaching because of the rude interruptions which continually broke in upon it. (See, for example, viii. 12, 13.)

4. Clearly, this passage is not in the ordinary sense biographical. The material is chosen throughout, consciously, with purpose. There is an order of thought, not an order of weeks and months. The 'I am's' form a *symbolic*, not an *autobiographic sequence*; and around them the rest of the content groups itself. Roughly, we may say that the content is—the claim of Jesus to the hearing of all men, supported by his credentials, frequently drawn from him by antagonism, and very frequently so interrupted that he did not enlarge; but nevertheless as complete as need be for our understanding; and, fundamental.

5. 'The self-consciousness of Jesus, on any terms, is the most wonderful thing in history'; on any terms whatever, whether of acceptance or rejection. We cannot get away from the absoluteness of his claim.

But it is essential that we get the tone and motive of the claim made, according to our author, by Jesus. His 'I am' is never of the Napoleonic order. 'I am, but never for myself, always for you.' It is spoken, we feel, with outstretched arms: 'Come unto me; no one of you need hunger, or doubt, or stray, or die.' There is in the call a tone quite new to human ears, quite unique still save where we catch echoes of it from his followers when, in his spirit, they say, 'Come unto him'; a tone in which personal meekness and essential dignity are most exquisitely blended. Jesus

never lost his poise, but the 'I am' is inexorable. The follower of Jesus follows *him*, not his teaching, his gifts, his example. 'True Christianity is a personal relationship.'

6. The 'I am' is sevenfold, the perfect number. The first two are initial, upon these rest the whole claim of Jesus Godwards and manwards—'("I am") the Son (of God') (v.), '("I am") the Son of man' (v.); and five correspond to five of the most universal and deeply-felt human needs—'I am' Food, Light, Liberty, Guidance, Life.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us read the passage through (v.–vi.) unpleasant and remote although much of it will seem, in order to make quite clear to ourselves the *tone* of the 'I am' of Jesus. Note, for example, the absolute humility towards the Father.

'Welcome, welcome, Jesus, whatsoever way thou comest, if we can get a sight of thee.'

I. I AM SON OF THE FATHER (OF GOD).

'My Father worketh hitherto and I work' (v. 17).
'I can of myself do nothing' (v. 30).
'My teaching is not mine, but His that sent me' (viii. 16).

Notes.

1. Sonhood is the first claim which Jesus makes upon our faith. We have seen that, as nearly as

human words can express Divine fact, in order to our knowledge of Divine Fatherhood, Divine Sonhood became visible, incarnate. 'I saw in Christ that the Father is.'

The wretched, almost de-humanised paralytic had at call arisen from his mattress, taken it up, and walked out into the street as if the thirty-eight years of his helplessness had been a mere dream. It was the Sabbath day, and Jesus had broken the Sabbath law (v. 18); he had made the man break it also (10, 11). In defence, he referred the lovers of law to a higher than the Sabbath law—the Father law. '*My Father works, and I work.*' There is no rest, even on the Sabbath, from Father love and care; there can be no rest from sonly following of the Father's doings.

2. Let us study for a moment the picture of Fatherhood and Sonhood which follows, remembering that the setting is that of an oriental and patriarchal household. The Father is the Centre and Source of all the Life; the Son—one Son alone counts in a patriarchal home—is the medium through which his purposes are made known and carried out. The life of these two is as one life (v. 26). The Son acts with the Father (19). He is in the full confidence of the Father (20). Visible acts of the Son are the very counterpart of invisible acts of the Father (22–20). It is impossible to separate them in thought: They are one (23). If the Son be acting in name of the Father at any time, he will in a true sense do 'greater' deeds, for he must show his credentials (24).

3. Two such delegated acts are instanced: (*a*) the act of 'quickening,' and (*b*) the act of 'judg-

ment,' both of which are acts of the Father. (*a*) The Father is the original Source of all the life of the household; life, not death, health, not weakness, are His will. He will be grossly misjudged if this vital fact is unrealised or forgotten in the family. The Son must make it clear to all. The poor creature of the Bethesda porch, who had walked away so joyfully a few hours before, provided the parable on the physical plane of the purpose of the Father of life on every plane, physical, moral, and spiritual: abounding life is the will of God. (*b*) The Father judges also, or rather, He does not judge. The act of the discernment of character and of motive, which is the core of true judgment within the house, is function of one trained for the purpose through intimate understanding and sympathy. To this senior Son the Father commits all judgment (22).

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us meditate upon this conception of Jesus, not now in any theological sense, but that we may realise how the qualities and powers which are most characteristic, are due directly to his sonliness towards God.

'Lord of truth and purity
We turn to Thee to build up in us Thy own nature.
Give us Thy own vision of the eternal values,
Thy own resolute disregard of the second best.'

II. I AM THE SON OF MAN (v.).

'Wouldest thou be made whole?' (v. 6).
'Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' (vi. 2–11).
Jesus wept. They said, 'Behold how he loved him' (xi. 35).

Notes.

1. 'Because he is the Son of man' (v. 27). Is there any word in all literature more gracious than this which opens to us the secret of the Divine discernment of our lives? This Son is not only son of the Divine Father, in closest fellowship with Him, he is Son also of the house. He knows every corner of it; he grew up in it. He has experienced its disciplines as well as its joys. He knows every man, woman and child in it, name, circumstances, characteristics, difficulties, in that peculiar intimate fashion for which his love for all who belong to the Father has prepared him. He is their Son also, so to speak, as well as the Father's Son. The rank and file of the Family roughly characterise each other, and injustices for lack of understanding are all too frequent. 'The Son,' the dear elder Son of the House, understands. He reads into failure, into the worst breakdown, the hidden weak desires and efforts, the sorrow over disgrace brought upon the Family Name. The Father does both justice and mercy when He gives to the Son '*authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man.*'

'I am the Son of the Father, I expound to you the Father-heart and will; I am your Son, I expound to you yourselves.'

2. The claim was tremendous, and it was not surprising that the Jews heard blasphemy in it. But they heard only an uplifting of himself to the side of God; the meek bearing of Sonhood, the tender Father-like message, were completely lost upon them.

3. The testimony which Jesus offered in support of his Sonhood was fivefold—the testimony of his own character (30, 31); of the Baptist (32–35), of his works (36), of the Father Himself (37, 38), and of the Scriptures (39).

Jesus claimed especially that he bore his credentials visibly, from the Father Himself. This is by far the most important witness. It is witness, let us remember, to his Sonhood. A father, an ordinary human father, bears a very strong witness to his son when he trusts him with, let us say, an important mission, to act in his name. If the son be strikingly like him in feature, form, carriage, or voice, he will say, 'My son, you carry your credentials in your person; anyone who has ever seen me will recognise you.' The best credentials are the family resemblance. The witness of the Divine Father to Jesus is Jesus' character, a character humanly recognisable as ideally Son-like. Son-like *grace*, self-effacing, wooing, and winning, for the Father only; Son-like *truth* making high demand upon life and loyalty for the honour of the Father only. Such a Son implies such a Father; such a Father implies such a Son.

For Thought and Prayer.

In the seventeenth chapter of this Gospel, Jesus is

represented as rendering an account of his mission to God. Let us meditate upon the chapter in this aspect of it.

'O Lord, this is a great marvel in my heart: I would wish to see Thy Divinity, and Thou showest me Thy humanity; I would wish to seek Thy Sweetness, and Thou settest before me Thy bitterness.'

III. I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE (vi.).

'Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?' (vi. 42).

'It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life' (vi. 63).

Notes.

1. The Son, doing the Father's work in His Name, as we have seen, quickens life. When life has been started afresh in the half-dead, the first thing required is sustenance; and, as the cure of the paralytic is symbolic of the first, so the feeding of the five thousand at Bethsaida is symbolic of the second. The great multitude were fed that day because they were hungry, and as a revelation of graciousness and power, this we have already been told in the Synoptic Records; as used by John, the incident is the symbolic act through which a truth is to be taught. In the earlier accounts, as seen from the historic standpoint, the act was a miracle; here, it is no miracle; from the standpoint of the Prologue it is a 'sign'

of Sonhood and of Fatherhood behind it (14). The sustaining of life, the providing of all that is implied in the Bread of the day, is the duty of the Father; distribution of the store is the duty of the Son.

2. The satisfied multitude would have such a Food-distributor to be their King (vi. 15); they rushed after Jesus because 'they ate of the loaves and were filled' (26). Jesus withheld himself at this point, in order, if it were possible, to excite a deeper hunger, and to satisfy it. 'Labour for another Bread,' he said, 'which will indeed be a Gift' (27). 'I am the Bread of Life.'

Bread—that which, with practically every race, includes the whole food supply; that by which strong men live. As bread to healthy hunger, so I am bread (49–51).

As bread serves its purpose by becoming a very part of the body to the sustaining of the life, so I am Bread.

3. It is a word addressed to the hunger of humanity. Man has had an almost limitless capacity for satisfaction in a hundred different directions, an almost limitless restlessness because satisfaction was not forthcoming. He has had an insatiable appetite for beauty, love, joy; intellectual hunger, moral hunger (not quite so keen), social hunger, heart hunger; these, with his graspings after whatever offered even partial satisfaction, make up the history of his manhood. Jesus, simply, with assurance, said that morning to the crowd, 'I am the Father's response to the hunger from which you suffer, I am the very satisfaction for which you crave. The Author

of life is the Father, the intention of life is its satisfaction: you shall be satisfied; and to each further and deeper longing, further and deeper satisfaction.'

No one who has hungered after the great things can mistake the meaning here. We live by the beauty we crave, by the thoughts of our masters, by the loves of our hearts: these are our bread of life, they become our life of life. It has been said that in the simple provincial life which Jesus lived two thousand years ago, he could not possibly know all that was involved in his words. What, for example, could he dream of the elaborate needs of our own day, the dainty dishes for the epicure in foods, or the light meat for the failing appetite of the invalid? Yet what if the twentieth century needs just Bread—the Bread of Life?

4. It was a very great venture which Jesus asked of that Galilean crowd, that they should expect to find all the manifold longings of their nature satisfied in communion with him; and the difficulties which they raised were quite natural.

(*a*) We prefer to earn our own living. 'What must we *do?*' (27–29). 'You must labour to be willing to receive your living.' Fathers love to give; true children love to receive.

(*b*) But then, we must have a 'sign' before we can be expected to risk ourselves upon such high offers (30, 31). The Bread sign was declined. They knew all about that bread. The lad who supplied it was one of themselves; they had watched the distribution, from the moment when Jesus received it to that in which each received his own share. It was

common bread and common fish, nothing better. If it had been manna from heaven, that would have been a sign. *We* must dictate the 'sign' which we will accept. But, who shall dictate the terms between two parties—the Offerer, or the receivers?

(*c*) He who makes this great offer of himself, who is he?—'He is the son of Joseph, and we know his father and mother' (42). This is the difficulty of the familiar. They thought that their acquaintance accounted for Jesus. Did his father and mother explain his character, his actions, his words? Was Jesus really like a Nazarene?

(*d*) 'How can he give us his flesh to eat?' (52). A quite explicable difficulty. How can one enter into vital corporate union with another? And if it were possible to let another into the innermost life, would not all our independence, which we prize so dearly, be lost? But Jesus himself gloried in dependence. 'I live by the Father,' he said. He knew that mutual dependence is the true law of life. To refuse to live in secret intimacy with Christ is to refuse Christ altogether. This is the sacramental thought in its first simplest terms. To take his teaching and try to live it is quite good; it will make unusually good people; but that has nothing whatever to do with the mystical secret which he tried to unfold in this insistent '*I am the Bread of Life.*'

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us work out for ourselves the practical meaning of this Bread parable. In what sense can we say that

Jesus satisfies the hunger of human life? Have we known anyone absolutely satisfied?

'Health of mind and body grant us, O Thou Wisdom of the Father, blessed Jesus.'

IV. I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (viii. 12–ix.)

In him was life, and the life was the light of men (i. 4).

'He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (viii. 12).

'One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see' (ix. 25).

Notes.

1. 'Again, therefore, Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the Light of the world' (viii. 12).

It is not surprising that Jesus got no further. Each word must have been a fresh shock to that Jerusalem audience. They would be amazing words to us to-day if we allowed ourselves to realise their full scope and meaning. For—here is no sort of limit: none of space, time, or sphere; none of measure or of power.

2. Jesus was interrupted; but if any darkened, bewildered soul desired fuller teaching, it was not denied. A 'sign' was given for those who could interpret it, the sign of the blind man to whom Light came according to the promise.

(*a*) A man blind from his birth: a gradual quickening within him of hope and trust through

the blind man's sense of touch and of quick voice perception; a venture of obedience to a command because the voice wrought confidence; sight; LIGHT.

(*b*) A man ignorant: a gradual quickening within him of an intellectual conviction through a firm grip of facts; see how he marshals them. 'The Man that is called Jesus made clay, anointed mine eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash"; so I went away and washed, and I received sight' (ix. 11). 'He is a prophet' (17). 'Not a sinner'—see how he comes to that conviction (24–32). A Sight-giver, and therefore 'from God' (32, 33). 'Lord, I believe'; LIGHT, again, in the intellectual sphere.

(*c*) A man, through touch and voice, through venture and experience, through growing conviction, coming at a spiritual vision: '*He worshipped him.*' LIGHT once more. 'Christianity,' says Cardinal Newman, 'is the bearing in upon us of a Character until we find the Character irresistible.'

3. It is a wonderful image, this of Light. Light illumines, it also sifts. It lights up a dark room, it also reveals its condition, filthy or clean, furnished or unfurnished; there is the lantern, and there is the flashlight: Light is genial, gracious, gloom-dispelling; Light is also austere, awful, searching.

4. One of the facts which most impressed the author of the Fourth Gospel was that Jesus inevitably sifted men. His presence opened blind eyes; it also blinded many eyes which their owners thought were wide open. Glance over his commentary upon that day's story (39–41), and note—

(*a*) Those who profess to have Light are held responsible for Light.

(*b*) Those who have no consciousness of darkness in themselves, have no Light.

(*c*) All blindness, after Vision has been offered, is wilful blindness; for that the responsibility is very grave. '*Ye say, "We see": your sin remaineth.*' That is our Lord's last word, as the Light of the world, to the darkened Jerusalem conscience.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us meditate upon the closing sentences of this passage (ix. 39–41), under the three headings suggested in paragraph 4, noting how Jesus did sift, and still does sift character. Then let us again note how he enlightened, and enlightens the blind.

'Lift up our souls to the pure, bright, radiant, atmosphere of Thy presence.'
'Enlighten the eyes of those that sit in darkness,
Knowing not and caring not that Light exists in Thy world.'

V. I AM THE DOOR (x.).

'He that entereth not in by the door . . . the same is a thief and a robber' (x. 1).

'By me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out. . . .' (x. 9).

Notes.

1. In the whole range of human experience probably that which may be symbolised by 'doors'

is the most haunting of all. Doors meet us constantly; doors which shut in from free movement, which shut out from that which we passionately desire; doors over the locks of which we spend many a weary hour, other doors against which we fling ourselves again and again in the vain hope that they will yield to our feeble weight; and yet again doors which open a few inches to give a glimpse of delightsome things beyond, and close again upon them. Into all the great joys of life we enter through doors; again through doors we pass into the darkness of sorrow, pain, tragedy; through forbidden doors and dark passages we penetrate with more or less of hesitation into the region of the knowledge of that which we call sin. A very little child will be responsive to a tale about doors; an old man's countenance will suffer many changes if you set him to talk about the doors through which, or past which, he has travelled during his long life journey.

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, I AM THE DOOR.'

2. The door here is the door of a sheepfold. It admits and closes in to safety and care, rest and peace. It opens out to pasture. 'They go in and go out,' for the fold is not a prison, and the door represents all that is most timely and satisfying in the existence of the sheep.

'What to us is the sheepfold, dear children?' writes old Tauler; 'it is the Heart of the Father whereunto Christ is the Gate that is called Beautiful.

3. 'By me' is entrance. By me alone? Is there no entrance save one into the Big Things? What

of those who never heard of the Door? And what of the good people, the better than many Christian people, who do not see their way to use that Door, or to belong to that Fold? What, again, of the many who assert that they are within Man's true Fold, having entered by their own doors? In other words, that they know the Father, and have come to the Father apart from him who has revealed Fatherhood? It is not for one to judge of another: but we should wish to learn of these what they have learned of the safety of the sheepfold, or of the Fatherhood which looms behind all the symbolism, *if the message of Jesus and of His followers were eliminated.*

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us consider whether Jesus is not, literally, our Door; to the truest things of life and love; to the truest Social Order; to the truest international peace. And let us meditate upon the best ways and means of bringing this conviction to the world.

> 'We pray Thee for a new breaking down of barriers
> Between man and man, race and race, nation and nation;
> We pray Thee for a new thinning of the obscurity
> Which hides Thee from the dim eyes of men.'

VI. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD (x.).

'The thief cometh not but to steal and to kill and to devour; I am come that they may have life, and may have it abundantly' (x. 10).

'The hireling fleeth because he is a hireling and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and my sheep know me' (x. 13, 14).

Notes.

1. It is good for those of us who have never known ideal shepherding that when Jesus presents himself to us as the Shepherd, he so fully portrays the true shepherd.

He contrasts him with the *thief*, bent on mischief towards sheep and shepherd; with the *stranger*, who haunts the fold for some reason of his own, but whose voice is unfamiliar and receives no response from the sheep; and with *the hired servant*, who works for a wage, and whose interest in the sheep is a purely personal and selfish one. The shepherd, on the other hand, is admitted by the porter at the gate at any moment, and moves about amongst the sheep in the fold, showing individual knowledge, natural authority, kindly care; to him the sheep respond with confiding trust. 'They know him.'

2. This is the tenderest, most intimate, of all the 'I AMS.' It pictures One who reads the duties of the shepherd most generously. He devotes himself to his office of shepherding. He seems to have no self apart from his sheep and their Owner. If they live a full and satisfied and abounding life, he is

fully repaid. All His strength and wisdom and devotion are at the disposal of the flock. He would die for any one of them.

Are sheep worthy of such unmeasured devotion? Can they appreciate it, or the shepherd? No; but he is satisfied. To have shepherded them in safety all throughout the day, and to have folded them safely in the evening; to know that between him and them is a mutual understanding of love, and that his voice has power over them—this is his joy. Then, too, it is in the Name of Another that He shepherds the flock, and the Owner must be satisfied to the uttermost.

It is a wonderfully beautiful and gracious parable, needing no elucidation, going to the heart of men and women everywhere who need shepherding.

Many years ago the writer was travelling in India, in an ancient and very dilapidated carriage, which required repair at frequent intervals. Towards night we were detained for this purpose in a lonely little valley in the basin of which thousands of sheep, which had been feeding upon the surrounding hillsides during the day, were now crowded. It was a scene of wild confusion. The silly creatures rushed hither and thither in a bewilderment which was both pathetic and laughable; they took no account of obstacles, they stumbled into ditches from which a little watchfulness would have saved them, and scrambled out again with no small difficulty, they seemed to be rolling over and over each other for no end.

As we watched the great moving mass of living creatures, we became gradually aware that some

order was emerging out of the chaos; the shepherds, whom we could now distinguish, were moving hillwards in various directions, and we discovered that each sheep was really struggling to respond to a peculiar, familiar call.

Long before we were able to proceed on our journey the confusion was past, and orderly processions of contented sheep were wending their several ways after their own shepherds. No dogs were required.

'*I am the Good Shepherd, and know My own, and My own know Me.*' '*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*'

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us meditate upon the multitudes scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd, who fail to lead themselves, and who cry for leaders; for those also who are self-assured and headstrong, who may lead others to disaster. And if we see in Jesus the true Shepherd of souls, let us commit his world to his care.

'Shall we not confidently rely on so gracious a Leader, who promises if we fail, to look back and relieve us?'

VII. I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE (xi.).

'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awaken him out of sleep' (xi. 11).

'Said I not unto thee that if thou shouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God' (xi. 40).

Notes.

1. '*Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*' Not a call, a simple message. The sisters trusted their friend. But he failed them when they most needed him. He remarked upon the illness of Lazarus, but those who heard him understood, no doubt, that it was not serious. They delayed two days. Then occurred a conversation which shows that the little company were fully conscious of the danger in which their Master stood. His proposal that they should return to Judea was received with a protest. The illness, even the death of Lazarus, would be a small matter in comparison with his precious life.

Thus they missed entirely his preparatory lesson for the last of the great words which he wished to speak. 'Death is sleep. We go to prove it. Some day you will find comfort in our experience at Bethany.'

2. Note the extent of Martha's trust in Jesus:

Jesus' presence would have saved her brother. She fully believed in his power to heal.

Even yet, that power could do she hardly knew what. She believed in his peculiar power with God.

Her brother would rise again. She accepted generally the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

But when Jesus appealed for a more definite expression of trust, she fell back upon a general confession of his Messiahship.

Mary acted characteristically. She, too, repeated the cry which had no doubt been the burden of their conversation during these four long days; but she wished only to weep out her sorrow at his feet. And Jesus, infinitely wise, infinitely loving, met her tears with his tears, even as he had met Martha's reasoning spirit with his teaching.

3. Note now the double and advancing thought expressed in verses 25 and 26:

(*a*) '*I am the Resurrection*'—'he that believeth on me, though he were dead yet shall he live': a death, and a life notwithstanding death.

(*b*) '*I am the Life*'—'whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die': a life which excludes death altogether.

The *first* speaks to us who know death and must realise immortality notwithstanding death; the *second* calls us from out of a living life and a great faith to deny death's very existence. Physical death is no death to a living spirit.

4. The parable of the rising of Lazarus from his physical 'sleep' beautifully illustrates, not only this progressive lesson of Jesus concerning death, it sets forth the significance of his 'I am.' This Son of our own, who weeps with us for our sense of bereavement, is Son also of the Father of Life, and he

not only tells of the feebleness of death as seen in a universe of Life, he stretches his strong hand across the valley we dread, and shows us that it is no valley of death, but only a valley of death's shadow. Who does this for us is Life to us. He literally 'quickens' us.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us try to make clear to ourselves for our own comfort and the comfort of others, what is the true content of Jesus' Gospel of Life. What, for example, does it add to the older doctrine of the immortality of the soul?

> 'Master,
> Give us life to-day;
> Life strong and triumphant;
> Life full, free, and eternal.'

SECTION III.—THE CREDENTIALS OFFERED BY JESUS

(Chapters v.–xi.)

'Christianity is an experimental science, and the best answer to one who questions if it be true is, Try it.'

'Thou wilt interpret life to me, and men,
Art, nature, yea, my own soul's mysteries—
Bringing truth out, clear-shining, to my ken.'

GEORGE MACDONALD.

Introductory Notes.

1. There is no need to minimise the problem which met the Jewish people in Jesus. There was very much to perplex any thoughtful Jew. 'He is a good man.' 'Can it be that our rulers indeed know that this is the Christ?' 'Shall the Christ do more signs than these which this Man doeth?' On the other hand, 'Is not he Joseph's son?' 'Do we not know his mother and his brothers?' It must not be forgotten that he failed to fulfil, in any particular, the contemporary version of the national Hope. And their perplexity was not lessened by the attitude of their leaders, whose hostility had

very early become murderous in its intensity. 'Is this the Man whom they seek to kill?'

For the leaders of the nation the problem was very serious. They were, of course, politicians; they knew better than the people did that the national situation was very precarious, that any national movement would be very grave in its results, that retribution from their Roman masters would bear very heavily upon them in case of any popular movement which should prove unsuccessful.

The crisis found them quite unfit to judge wisely and truly. Their question never was, 'What is the truth about this Jesus!' but, 'What of our national situation, our future hopes and plans, and how will this movement affect them?' Truth was not desirable at the price of such national existence as they still had. Messiah or not, they must crush Jesus. This was their decision.

2. The centre of bewildered questioning on the one hand, and of a violent opposition on the other, Jesus moved during those months, quiet and strong in spirit. His mind and heart, his lips and hands were at liberty. He could use the openings offered to him by friend or by enemy; he could answer accusations and explain difficulties; and he never failed to offer positive help, positive teaching, some word of eternal meaning, at every opportunity. This is the Jesus of whom we read in the central chapters of the book.

3. John in behalf of Jesus, and Jesus in His own behalf, treated the matter of credentials very seriously. It was necessary that they should, for the insistent

'I am' by which Jesus in effect offered *himself* as the solution of every human problem; the 'my Father' by which he continually claimed unique communion with God, made an astounding demand upon faith.

For Thought and Prayer.

At Nazareth, Jesus is said to have *offered* a Gospel of human relief (Luke iv.); here he is said to *be* himself that Gospel. Let us consider this distinction between the two conceptions: *e.g.*, between 'sent to proclaim the recovering of sight to the blind' and 'I am the Light of the world.' Is there an essential distinction?

'Thy light, O Lord, do Thou bestow upon us, so that being rid of the darkness of our heart, we may attain to Thy light, which is Christ.'

I. Witnesses; Signs; Proofs (v.–xi).

'He is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world' (vi. 14).

'Never man so spake' (vii. 46).

'Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life' (vi. 68).

'Many believed on him, beholding the signs which he did' (ii. 23).

'How can a man that is a sinner do such signs?' (ix. 16, 31).

'If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself' (vii. 17).

Notes.

1. Frequent reference is made to *witness.* The formal witness passage is that which follows the Bethsaida sign (v. 30–47); but throughout the book we find that continually, with or against their will, men bore witness to something in Jesus which distinguished him from other men.

2. Jesus showed many '*Signs*,' but that which impresses the reader is that the sphere of the sign is limited. Many believed beholding the signs and received no response from him; many saw the signs and he received no response from them. Yet the value of signs as credentials must be found, for within their sphere they are of immense importance for our faith as well as for our understanding of that long past history.

To seers of mere signs of Jesus' personal power, he became a Doer of mere signs of his personal power, a Wonder-Worker. But, to seers of the Christ, however dim their vision, signs became symbols of the deep things of God.

Therefore, granted the mere preliminary office of drawing attention, the true function of a sign is to aid a trust which has already begun in that for which Jesus stood; signs are tokens of his authority and of his trustworthiness; ultimately they are tokens of the truth of his claim that God spoke through him. The voice of God through the signs is always the voice of grace; none of the signs are destructive: the paralytic lifts his mattress and walks away healed, the hungry crowd is fed, the blind man sees, the dead

man lives; these are signs or symbols of that which God is; '*the lifing Mind.*'

To curiosity, therefore, or to incredulity, a sign is nothing. To trust, however feeble, each sign is of incalculable value for encouragement, for establishment, and for a larger understanding of God. For signs, like witnesses, point beyond themselves; they are never an end, they are always a means. Jesus' followers saw the signs and trusted himself.

3. In chapters vii. and viii. there is a series of credentials which might be entitled, Jesus' '*Apologia pro Vita Sua.*' But it is characteristic of Jesus' educative method, that his proofs were not made easy; they demand discernment, and they imply human power and will to discern. The proofs which Jesus offered were three: (*a*) the proof of his life (vii. 1–13); (*b*) the proof of his teaching (vii. 14–24); and (*c*) the proof of personal attitude to his mission (vii. 25–52).

(*a*) The family life of Jesus reveals the same conflict which he met in the outer world; his brothers disapproved of the career which he had chosen, and were disappointed continually in the use which he made of his manifest gifts. Their position was perfectly natural. 'Why bury these unusual powers in little provincial villages? Take a good opportunity when it offers of using them to some purpose; let the capital, and especially your own followers, see your signs under favourable circumstances.'

'The world is still deceived with ornament.'

In Jesus' reply he lifted the sphere of powers and

opportunities to quite another level. A man working for his own hand may take such methods, use favourable opportunities, and make a show of the gifts he has; not a man with a Mission. He dare not hasten, any more than he dare delay, his 'time.' Neither dare he wait upon the popular suffrage. When Jesus went to Jerusalem, therefore, 'He went up secretly.'

In the region of the great things success is never won by short cuts. How has the world ever been won to any true advance? Not by hasty popular movements, nor by public demonstrations, nor by crowds and huzzas; ever by patient, largely secret labour; with frequent experience of failure, but with a fortitude which has arisen after each failure and begun again; shame and disrepute have not been absent, and successes have been visible only to the eye which saw very far.

(*b*) The proof of his message was offered to the people in the court of the temple (chapter vii. 14–24). Jesus followed his brothers up to Jerusalem 'and taught.' But according to all human law a teacher must have a degree or a certificate authorising him to teach (an ideal which has its weak as well as its strong aspect). Jesus had no such certificate. 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' How could he know? He had no education beyond that of a village school; he had no Rabbinical learning, no college standing.

The reply of Jesus is very fully given; we can only take note of the sum of it. 'My teaching is not my own.' He claimed to be a Messenger only,

passing on teaching which he had himself received. He must be judged by this claim only: *Try my teaching.*

Do you wish to know the source of it? Are you concerned to prove its truth or its falsehood? There is only one way, but it is safe. Not the way of reason, not the way of intellectual examination: reason and intellect are very limited in their range and their working; but the way of *experiment.*

'I was not disobedient,' said St. Paul.

'Will to do and you shall know.'

(*c*) Jesus did not profess to be an original Teacher. He claimed to be judged as a teacher who stood for Another. How may such a teacher be examined? There is one safe test. Does he work for his own ends, or for his own glorification? Is he loyal to the demand of his own teaching? Without ceasing Jesus made great the Name of Another; pled for Him; he ascribed all power, all grace to Him; obedience and loyalty to Another were the very heart of the life of Jesus.

A fair hearing is the least that any man can give to any teacher. Deny that, and there is not only discourtesy, there is personal failure; the hearer is self-judged. As we know, the Jews failed completely to stand this test; Jesus never had a fair hearing from them. 'As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.'

For Thought and Prayer.

If this matter of credentials should seem uninteresting or irrelevant, let us consider the importance not

only of making sure of our own convictions, so far as they go, but of being able to give a reason for them to the bewildered souls whom we constantly meet.

'Keep us, O Lord, from the vain strife of words, and grant us a constant profession of the truth.'

II. Offers which may be Verified by Acceptance

'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink' (vii. 37–39).

'He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life' (viii. 12).

'If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed' (viii. 31–37).

Notes.

We have glanced at the credentials offered by Jesus to doubters and disbelievers. But all his hearers did not belong to those classes, and Jesus, with unerring insight, knew that besides the hostile, there were men and women who were filled with a most touching longing that he might be all that he had said.

To these he turned, knowing their sore need—the unsatisfied, the bewildered, the fettered—made offers to them so gracious, and incidentally gave a

series of proofs so easily verifiable, that any hearer, whether a teacher of Israel like Nicodemus, or some simple seeker from a far-away village, could satisfy himself whether this were indeed, as the Samaritans had said, 'the Saviour of the world.'

It is as if Jesus had said, 'I am' is a hard saying; let me help you with a simpler word. For 'I am' take 'I offer'; you will find that it means exactly the same thing. 'I offer' because 'I am.'

The offers made by Jesus as recorded in this passage are three: (*a*) Water for the thirsting, (*b*) Light for the perplexed, (*c*) Freedom for the bound. Here let us note a characteristic method of Jesus. He knew indeed what men did not, that their need at the heart of it was one, that they should know God. But in his wonderful wisdom he met them where they were, where they had become conscious of need, 'I am Bread, Light, Safety, Guidance, Life.' 'I offer Satisfaction, Light, Freedom.' Some day they would find that these are, just, God.

(*a*) No imagery could better have expressed the meaning of Jesus than this of a supply of fresh, cool, flowing water for the parched lips and tongues and the burning throats of desert wanderers.

Have men ever done anything but thirst, and thirst again?

> 'The waters of this earth have failed,
> And I am thirsting still.'

Consciously or unconsciously, by reason of our failure to attain our true end, we have thirsted; and our life is a long series of efforts to quench thirst.

No man ever knew this better than this sympathetic kinsman of ours.[1]

Thirst is yours that it may be quenched. Strange half-understood longings are yours that you may press forward and find satisfaction. There is no measure to the satisfaction offered by Jesus. 'Fountains of living water,' fountains bubbling from within, this is his offer. It is not dependent, therefore, upon being with him, travelling joyously along country paths, resting in some quiet spot, absolutely satisfying, but not lasting. The only end of physical contact was to link Satisfier and satisfied. Let contact of spirit be established, and we carry our satisfaction within us.

(*b*) There are, and have always been, men and women upon whom the perplexity, mystery, tragedy of human experience have borne heavily. Literature, ancient and modern, eastern and western, is full of the agony of it. Men have sought light upon it in vain. Jesus stood one evening in the treasury of the temple, and offered to any one who would be of his company that he should never again 'walk in darkness, but should have the light of life.'

The secret of light in darkness could not be fully revealed until himself had passed by the darkest

[1] There is another of whom we also think instinctively in this connection. He also knew human thirst well, he also strove to teach how it might be quenched. 'All life is thirst,' said the Indian Master, 'and thirst is misery. You drink and still you thirst; you fail of the cup, and still you thirst; your thirst will never be satisfied. Discipline yourself, patient continuance in self-discipline, in denial, will bring at length a great reward. In the end you will cease to thirst.'

Note the great contrast between the two great Masters.

ways, and illumined them. Nearly two thousand years have passed since the words were spoken, and throughout the generations men have testified that when the condition of following has been met the promise has been fulfilled. The light of life has been theirs; sorrow, pain, confusion, death, the intolerable blackness of evil, have ceased to be haunting problems; they have been transmuted into veritable glory.

(*c*) To accept, even to examine, an offer of freedom is to make an acknowledgment of bondage; and who will acknowledge bondage? Not the Jews. Their forefathers were serfs in Egypt, and captives in Babylon, themselves were under the yoke of Rome; yet they bravely declared 'We were never in bondage to any man.' It is an illustration of ordinary human nature.

Yet it is probable that there comes to most honest men at some time a vision of freedom, the freedom of a world of rightness, which as they well know, they are unable to realise. 'Not what I would that do I practise, but what I hate that I do.' True freedom must involve the right to live in that world of rightness with which all men feel that they have affinity, the power to become the true self of which all men vaguely dream. According to the teaching of Jesus that right and power were missed when God was missed. True life is son life, not slave life.

The conditions of freedom are always and everywhere the same; they are not arbitrary, but belong to the very nature of freedom. The freedom of the worlds of art, music, literature, is given to those who

submit to become humble learners in those worlds. The freedom of any state is only granted to those who submit themselves to the law and government of that state. The freedom of home is only realised by the child who accepts the law and the spirit of the home.

Jesus therefore spoke no hard word when he told his hearers that the freedom of the Family of God, that world of rightness, was theirs on the condition of submission to the Family Order; that which, for lack of a better word, we have been calling sonliness, not blind obedience to an imposed will, but delight in a will which is absolute rightness. This is freedom. 'Love, and do what you like.' Prove it.

In studying this Gospel we are continually impressed by the patience with which Jesus strove to make himself understood. No hearer could fail to understand. It then became their duty to discern his right to make such offers and his power to fulfil them. We are given to understand by this author that men were practically impelled to accept or to reject Jesus, and that the choice made in each case affected character to its very foundations.

Men must discern. Discernment is not easy. It is not meant to be easy. It is intended to draw into intense activity every power of our nature. It is a large part of the training of life. No one is justified in shirking any great question which comes before him; and the greatest question of all is, What do I think of Christ, who comes to me with such comfortable offers, and such stupendous claims?

Aid upon aid, proof upon proof, he offered so

generously that it is as if he laid his whole being open to human discernment. This Man of men admits those who will 'to an exceeding wonderful familiarity with himself.' And those who come thus close to him, find that they have been admitted to an exceeding wonderful familiarity with God Himself.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us again think over the distinction between the 'I am' and 'I offer' of Jesus. It is as if, when the 'I am' was beyond comprehension, he condescended to the 'I offer.'

Let us consider, however, that the offer of a *gift* is not to be compared, for generosity or for value, with the offer of a *self*.

What shall we say of the accepters of the gift rather than of the giver?

> 'Thou art my life—I the brook, Thou the spring;
> Because Thine eyes are open I can see;
> Because Thou art Thyself, 'tis therefore I am me.'

SECTION IV

I. The Supreme 'I'

II. The 'I Ams' of the Interior Life

(Chapters xii.–xx.)

'To those who know him as you know him, and have seen him as you have seen him, better Jesus, beaten and defeated, than all the universe besides, triumphant and crowned.'—Shorthouse.

'Christ, our Lord, Who is the Book of Life.'—
Angela of Foligno.

'Reality—though seas of grief may first be plunged through to find it—is always joy. For love is joy, and joy is strength, and both are aspects of the great central reality of the life of the soul.'—Algernon Blackwood.

I. The Supreme 'I.'

'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself' (xii. 32).

'Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth by itself alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal' (xii. 24, 25).

Notes.

1. We pass now into the closing section of the Gospel, which tells of Passion Week. Caiaphas the politician had spoken the plausible words, that 'one man should die for the nation' (*e.g.* be handed over to Rome as a traitor to Rome, by a loyal subject people). Jesus had ridden into the capital in peaceful state, facilitating the action of the Sanhedrim.

Obviously John wishes his readers to understand that Jesus gave himself to his death. The Jewish leaders feared that they might even now lose their prey. They sent to seize him by stealth, at midnight. They sent a detachment of armed soldiers, as well as officers of the Sanhedrim,[1] as if they expected a successful resistance. Somewhere in this Man lay a hidden might which they dreaded.

He went to meet his betrayer. Twice over he asked whom they sought, and twice over he offered himself to their hands. Through that long morning the dignity and majesty of righteousness were not certainly upon the seats of judgment. No account is given of the carriage of Jesus as he moved from place to place, and we need none. Serene, patient, mighty in his personal righteousness and in the consciousness that—as he told Pilate—the very authority by which he was being tried was God's authority (xix. 11). Jesus stood during those early hours of 'Good Friday the strong Son of God, Master

[1] The officers of the Sanhedrim had once already failed to take Jesus (vii. 32, 45, 46).

of them all. This it is to believe that God reigns.

On false witness Jesus was declared by the High Priest to be guilty of blasphemy. He was pronounced innocent by the Roman Governor of the charge of high treason. He was condemned to death in defiance of every principle of justice, and was handed over to the soldiers, who with every possible additional indignity carried out the sentence. It was still early on that fifth day of April when the trials ended: and Jesus was crucified at nine o'clock.

This is the history as John records it.

2. We shall return in another connection to the incident which led to the last significant public word of Jesus, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself,' that inclusive 'I' which forms the starting-point of these notes. Here let us concentrate attention upon the words themselves, and upon the act which followed them. Jesus was not in his own conception on the way to disaster, he was on the way to victory. What, then, was his conception of victory? Not certainly success in any human sense of the term. It seems to have consisted first of all, not in any result outside of himself, but in something within himself, in the carrying out of the purpose of his own soul. That purpose had from the beginning been declared, it was an uttermost allegiance to that which seemed to him to be the constraint of God Himself. To have failed in this by so much as a cry, 'Father, save me from this hour,' would have been to his high sense of call the one possible disaster (xii. 27, 28). Therefore he set himself to

his awful task; he would endure to the uttermost; and troubled though he was, his only cry was, 'Father glorify Thy name.'

3. But in the purpose which led to the Cross there could be nothing arbitrary, and the words of Jesus, 'I will draw all men,' remind us of the sense in which the purpose must be understood, and the final victory assured. To 'draw all men,' this was the purpose; 'I, lifted up,' this was the method.

In having broken with his father lies the tragedy of the life of any son; but there is another aspect of the tragedy, in separation from the child must lie the passion of the father. The Cross, in this view, is simply a revelation of the infinite sorrow of the Father over the alienation of the child. In a true sense the death of Jesus was not an act, it was an age-long passion within Godhead, which must express itself both for its own sake, and for the sake of the world which was its occasion.

Why not allow an indifferent world to follow the path of its choice? That is not easily explained. Love has in it an insistent quality. It is one, and demands one-ness; it is holy and demands holiness. It goes forth, regardless of cost, to draw back to itself that which has fallen from it.

4. In one of the loveliest of his shorter parables Jesus drew attention to another aspect of his supreme symbolic Act, its relation to universal law. God was Himself behind the Act, and God cannot act contrarily to His own Law. The grain of wheat obeys law by giving itself to be sown for the harvest's sake. Jesus obeyed the same law by giving himself

for his harvest, the winning of sons for God. God Himself obeys the same law of self-offering; He loves and He gives (iii. 16).

For the Law of laws—it is a hard saying till it is understood—is this Law of Love. Men fall from law as well as from grace when they fall from love.

5. We must never allow the simplicity of the record, or our own shrinking from the thought of it, to cause us to forget the awfulness of the shame and the suffering which were endured that day in our name; nor that the Cross is the symbol of the uttermost human sin, the uttermost human disgrace; but even in this aspect, in Jesus' own estimate, the Cross is something far beyond that; the Cross is the symbol of men conquered. Love is an awful motive power, even in our weakened human nature. Love is the most awful motive power in the Holy God when He would redeem a race for Himself. Love cannot fail to be awful in its working. At whatever cost, those children must be brought back—not to think lightly of Father, Love, and Home, but with some measure of understanding of the cost to the Father of sin towards Him.

"It is finished." This was the closing word and marks the moment of victory. The purpose was fulfilled and the task was accomplished.

6. It is surely not necessary to say that the full significance of the Cross has never found expression in human languages. If words could have served the purpose we should have had a further 'I am,' but our Lord went from 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' directly to the Cross. Doctrines and

definitions have been formulated, and are in their sphere needful; but each one who has been drawn to Christ, who has come home to the Father, to find himself a humble, happy, forgiven child, has learned, and will learn unspeakable things, which it is impossible for lips to utter.

Jesus lay in the grave from Friday evening, through the Sabbath, and until the morning of the first day of the week, the Christian Lord's Day.

We cannot fathom the mystery of the Resurrection, but one or two facts the Gospel makes clear.

He returned the same Jesus, still human; he wore a true body which was recognisable. He talked with his friends, he ate with them, he cooked a morning meal for tired fishermen.

But more striking than their identification of their Master was the change which they found in him. Earth was no longer his home, he came amongst them but was apart from them. 'Touch me not,' he said. The limitations of the body were gone, he would never henceforth be known after the flesh; the lessons of the mystical relationship would now be understood; and to those we must now turn our thoughts.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us meditate upon the phrase of Jesus—'*lifted up*' (iii. 14; viii. 28; xii. 32); the 'brazen serpent' of Moses being its illustration; the reference being in each case to conquest. Let us consider whether

the lifting up of the Cross—in a very different sense—be not the need of our own time.

'Heart of Jesus: Grant to this world peace, in truth, in justice, and in charity.'

II. The 'I ams' of the Interior Life.

'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life' (xiv. 6).
'I am the true Vine' (xv. 1).
'I in them, Thou in me . . . perfected into One' (xvii. 23).

Notes.

By the Holy Way of the Cross the followers of Jesus may pass, if they will, with Jesus and John, into the innermost things. Thus far Jesus had talked with men on their own level of thought and experience. The sevenfold 'I am' was addressed to the world, and although it contained many hints of the full Divine Message for those who had ears to hear, it was manifestly public and preparatory.

After the strange compelling 'I, lifted up, will draw all men unto myself,' it became possible for Jesus to lead those who were prepared to follow him, to use the beautiful Scottish phrase, 'Far ben.' There remain two 'I ams' of 'an exceeding wonderful familiarity,' which he spoke to his own friends. The

world has nothing whatever to do with them; they bear no meaning for it. Even to his friends they bore no meaning when he first spoke them on the night before he died; they only became explicable after the Resurrection, while he gently prepared them to understand the interior life of the children of God.

1. The threefold 'I am' is the response of the Son of God and of Man to the longing of the spirit after the unseen and the eternal. The disciples had begun to realise something of the sphere which is his in the universe of God, and that he had tented with men upon the earth level in order to raise them to fellowship with him upon his level. The home of their spirits must become just HIMSELF.

Space, Thought, Existence, all henceforth must be Christ, because it is, and always has been, Christ.

Words are useless to express the great things; but something of the distinction between this 'I am' and those spoken to the great audiences will be understood by the 'spirit sense.' This belongs to those who have right of way into the presence of God. It tells that every region of life is full of Christ our glorious Lord; it breaks down all barriers of the physical and the temporal. We may walk, think, live, in him. The step into the larger life is no more than a step into a larger room of the same house, with a wider outlook beyond, and more intimate relations within.

It was indeed expedient that he should go away.

His own then are at home with him; but lest they should fail to realise at once the wonders of the lifting process, He added a further word of

comfort. He also was at home with them. 'I will not leave you orphaned; I come to you.' Invisible to the world, immediately, consciously present to them; Christianity is a secret companionship.

The wonders of the heart of God begin to dawn upon the Christian. For to be at home with Christ, and that Christ should be at home with us, this is to find our home in God.

2. Jesus went away. He was henceforth known no more after the flesh. He is 'at the right hand of God exalted.' The disciple may lose the sense of intimacy with the immanent universal Christ. 'The Way, the Truth, the Life' may become a transcendental or an unspiritual idea, for want of the use of the spiritual sense.

There is still therefore another 'I am' most wonderful, most intimate of all, which includes all, into the meaning of which

> 'Whoso desires to penetrate
> Deeper, must dive by the spirit sense."

The Vine; the branches. One life, one only. One sap running through the Vine to the furthest living branch. Stop the passage of the sap or obstruct it, and the branch immediately wilts. Break a branch, the branch dies, and the Vine bleeds.

> 'Ever each entwined
> With each, all living from the central Heart:
> And you, and I, my brethren, live and grow
> Branches of that immortal human Vine.'

We have read 'I am the Bread of Life,' 'I offer

the Water of Life,' and we have dimly caught something of the significance of the symbolism of Love. Can we enter into the wonderfulness of this supreme symbol of Love? Not now, he who partakes of my life lives by my life, but rather, his life and my life are *one Life*. Vine and branches are one, Christ and those who will have it so are one, literally, absolutely *one*. The hidden life of each is his life; and his life is their life. The fruit of the Vine is borne by the branches; their doings are his doings, his doings are theirs. This is the spiritual message of the true life of the son, the interior son; this is the secret of Christian living as compared with the highest moral living known. They are indeed 'far ben' who learn this wondrous mystery

> 'That Thou with us art truly one,
> And we are one with Thee.'

Sheer immeasurable Divine Love is here, and the weakest disciple may know it.

For Thought and Prayer.

Here is no subject for study, it is subject for musing; let us muse over the symbol of the Vine and branches, if possible, in company with a vine.

'O Thou deep Love, I pray Thee to draw the desire of my heart to Thyself. Bring me forth from the bonds of death, in Thy death, in Thy rising, *in Thee*.'

PART II

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WORD

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

THUS far we have concentrated our attention upon the gradually unfolded self-revelation of Jesus. If he be indeed all that we think we have found him to be, his claim upon us is the first of all claims ; he is the Lord of every human life, and no life comes to its own until it finds itself in right relation with his. It is so for his sake, because of the costliness and love of his approach to us ; it is so for our sakes, because thus only shall we become children of God, fulfilling the purpose of our life.

Every word addressed to us becomes a challenge when thought of in this light ; and the challenge of Jesus must now occupy our attention. We shall find it everywhere in the Gospel ; but it is summed up in four great words which follow each other in simple natural psychological order, words of Jesus himself.

It is possible that the first impression made upon us by this fourfold challenge of Jesus may be its austerity ; we may even shrink from it. But if we look into it honestly, we shall find that, not its severity, but its perfect naturalness and reasonableness and

beauty are the characteristics which will remain with us.

Let us remember also that this is the language of symbol. Human language has not yet attained to the expression of divine experience.

SECTION I.—BIRTH IN ORDER TO LIFE

(Chapters i. 35–iv.)

'It is life, more life, we want, whether we be young or old. Life is everything. That which is would be more. The eternal root of our being causes us to long for larger existence. . . . Nothing indeed which is not infinite can justly be said to live.'

'Seek thou the lowly Heart of God; it will plant a little seed of the paradise-plant in thy soul, and if thou only wait a little while a great tree will grow out of it.'—BOEHME.

'Only as the divine life becomes my own life, and I cease to imitate because I am that which I fain would follow, shall I find myself in the strength of the constancy of God.'

BORN ANEW: A CHALLENGE TO HUMILITY.

'Marvel not that I said unto thee, "Ye must be born anew." The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit' (iii. 7, 8).

Notes.

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.' This is the initial challenge of Jesus. To place it rightly, it will be well to glance again over the passage in which it lies embedded (i. 19–iv.).

1. We have often, no doubt, been impressed by the simple joyousness of the early months of our Lord's ministry. They were a season of pure delight. A small band of chivalrous young men had gathered around him. They spent quiet 'wander-days' together, while the disciples learned their first lessons about the 'Father' of Whom Jesus spoke so intimately and so gravely. For them admission to the Kingdom of God was quite unconscious. They did not look forward to count the cost of discipleship, or to reckon with the labours and the burdens of the future; they were happy, satisfied, un-self-conscious, like little children who are at home. The king's officer, to whom the birth of trust came at a point of time, was as childlike as they in the simplicity of his experience.

2. The case of the Samaritan woman was different. A lifetime of conscious sin lay between her then self and the self which might have been susceptible to the influence of holy desires; and Jesus, in his heavenly wisdom, patiently and surely dealt with that sinful past, clearing the way for her response to his offer of a new and satisfying life. She responded so quickly as to suggest the simile of 'fields white to harvest.'

3. It was to Nicodemus that the challenge seemed too hard, not to these. The first requirement—a frank acknowledgment of inability to attain sonhood towards God unaided—was too severe for a Nicodemus. Nicodemus could, and no doubt he did, live a good life; a much finer life than for example that of Simon while he slowly and painfully grew into

Cephas. But he could not become a son of God; he could not naturalise himself as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. He was intended for it; he had the capacity for it; at his best he longed for it, as when he paid that midnight visit to Jesus; but he had grown away from the simplicity which accepts its childhood; he had even further to travel back than the woman of Samaria, strange though it may seem that it should be so.

For sonhood is a gift: if this be the stumbling-block of the respectable and the proud, it is the Gospel of the sinner and the humble. To the latter, life becomes a new thing, a rich and radiant and godlike thing. He finds that he who was nothing has become a member of a great Family, that he has a part in a great purpose. He not only sees, he has entered the Kingdom of God.

Nicodemus learnt the secret when he consented to become as a little child; and although his was not a strong or a gallant spirit, and he did not for long venture out into the free life of the disciple, he bore some scorn for the Master, and he helped to bury him. He who is not too proud to enter by the door which the Father has opened, however narrow and low it may seem from the outside, is the son who counts in the Family. All that is worthy and gracious in a young growing life returns to him, however old he may have felt when still outside that door. John and Andrew, Philip, Peter, and Nathanael, the Samaritans and Herod's officer, chose a better part than Nicodemus.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us ponder the passage again (i. 35–iv.), that we may enjoy the youth of it and endeavour to bring ourselves into unison with those who choose the better part.

'Nothing are we, O Lord, but what Thou hast made us; nothing have we but what Thou hast given us.'

'Light, salvation, and eternal strength from the fountain of the heart of Jesus Christ, be our refreshment, renewal, and eternal life.'

SECTION II.—OBEDIENCE IN ORDER TO UNDERSTANDING

(Chapters v.–xi.)

'Severity and tenderness went ever side by side in the life of our blessed Lord: tenderness such as the world had never seen; and ever close at hand a great and stern severity in regard to others and to himself. . . . Somewhere surely in our lives that note of severity should be telling, really and deeply.'—BISHOP PAGET.

'It must be a strong and a mighty will, not a broken-winged wish, fluttering hither and thither, rising with one pinion, struggling and falling with the other.'—AUGUSTINE.

OBEDIENCE: A CHALLENGE TO WILL.

'If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself' (vii. 17)

Notes.

1. What next? Next, as with all young life, growth; and the Son, speaking in name of the Father, went on to tell of the course of the growing life of the sons of God.

As we have already found, all that is needed for growth is ready—food, light, an open door leading in to rest and safety, and out into the wholesome open-air, shepherding, an assured future; but the Son is himself the centre of the hope and the strength and the courage of the human sons of God.

For their part they are learners. Their task is to grow up like him, to evolve character, the character of the strong son as distinguished from the child; and the school in which the task is carried forward is the school of experience. They are not to live in spiritual luxury or licence in order that they may grow. Responsibility is thrust upon them. Choice, discernment, action, these lead out from childhood into manhood and womanhood. Problems of life and faith and truth must be met, studied, and solved; because effort is the law of growth.

2. How shall we be assured that the words of Jesus are indeed truth? How shall we know the truths which we must know? 'You must learn to *will*,' is the reply of Jesus; 'you must learn to develop will power.' Not, observe, will to *believe*, but will to *do*; will to prove by doing.

You would be a son of God, and this Jesus comes to you professing to initiate you into the holy relation. How shall you know that he is a true and competent guide? Not by striving to convince yourself by means of thought, but by striving to reach the truth by means of experience. You will know by experience only, whether the 'I am' of Jesus is truth or falsehood; whether he does truly reveal the Fatherhood of God in such wise as that you can appropriate it.

You will know it thus and in no other way. You will know it thus, and in the course of gaining the knowledge, you will grow into sonhood. This is the lesson of—if we may use the word—the adolescent life of the son of God.

3. Here, even more vividly than in response to the earlier challenge, the eternal distinctions of character revealed themselves.

There were some who could not 'know.' There were those who knew all that was to be known already; they were so full of knowledge that there was neither space nor desire for more. There were those who were ready for any knowledge which would fit in with their preconceptions; they rejected all other. There were those who dreaded knowledge which might lead them off the safe track of the good old familiar paths of life. There were those who welcomed knowledge of the academic order; these were more curious regarding such sayings as 'I go away into the unseen,' than such as 'I offer freedom for the bound.' There were those also, attracted, moved, who would have liked to know; but when this high standard of humble learning and of the discipline of the will met them, turned away and 'walked no more with Jesus.' Jesus looked after them sorrowfully enough, but he let them go. He could not withdraw the challenge, the acceptance of which alone could bring out those elements of the nature of man which would in the end evolve the truest manhood. 'He cannot lower his demands to make discipleship easy.'

4. In all the gracious record of our Lord's words,

there is no word which opens to us more touchingly the divine love and yearning of the heart of Jesus than the word to the little company which remained with him—'Will ye also go away?' And it was well that there were a few who, although not yet dreaming of all that was involved for them in it, accepted the challenge and made their confession of faith: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we know and believe that thou art the Holy One of God.' These were they, let us remember, who had accepted the previous challenge. They have humbled themselves to become little children. They could now will to do, and could go on to meet experience as it should come, step by step, in a spirit of quiet trust.

Those who accepted this second challenge had no prevision of all which would be involved in it. Knowledge would involve for them such experiences as they would hardly have accepted if they had known all. They were not asked to know all. They learned day by day, and grew as they learned. The gists of satisfaction, light, freedom, became the commonplace of their experience. The 'I am' became a knowledge which was ever growing, ever full of new surprises. The sons of God think they know: but the knowledge of last year, of last week even, seems childish when compared with the knowledge of to-day. The Father behind all, in all, through all, who was once a far-distant God, comes near, and they begin to know Him, to speak with Him; in the end they will become 'at home' with Him.

'He who wills to do His will, *shall* know of the

teaching whether it be of God or whether Jesus spoke from himself.'

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us study the passage (v.–xi.) for the revelations of human folly which it contains. To realise these will not harm us.

'Blessed are they who find themselves in Thy most holy will.'

'Give me a cheerful spirit in which to work Thy wonders.'

SECTION III.—DEATH IN ORDER TO LARGER LIFE

(Chapters xii., xiii., xviii., xix.)

'The pages blotted with tears are not always the darkest to look back upon. One page of the world's history, stained with the bitterest tears ever shed upon earth and steeped in guiltless blood, is not the darkest to read. It is in the light of that sorrow that thou must understand all the rest. All those hard and bitter questions are answered there to the holy soul, and nowhere else and to none else.'—Bishop Hall.

'Let me be possessed by Love.'—À. Kempis.

I. Two Acts of Love.

'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you' (xv. 12).

Notes.

1. The opening paragraph of the history of Passion Week as recorded in this Gospel, contains the account of an act which appeared to those who were present to be one of useless and reckless extravagance; an act which carries the reader at once far beyond the world of childhood and beyond the world of the

disciplined will into a world of pure devotion. Even as we have found that with Passion Week John represents Jesus as having entered upon a new region of self-revelation, so he introduces to us a new region of human impulse and action.

A silent woman, who had been one of the most intimate friends of Jesus, and had cause for deepest gratitude to him, had with the swift prevision of love, foreseen that the end could not be long delayed. She seized the opportunity of his presence in her village to endeavour to express the love and sympathy for which she had no words, by means of a symbolic offering. She had lost all consciousness of herself; she was absorbed in him, her Lord.

2. On the evening before the Crucifixion, Jesus himself, impelled by the desire to express his love for 'his own,' did so in an act, the significance of which they failed to grasp; which Peter at least felt to be unfitting; he undertook the preparatory laving of their dusty feet before the evening meal. It was an act of the same order with that of Mary; it was an act of the same order with that by which he gave himself up that same night to the hands of sinful men, and to the death of the Cross.

We have reached the sphere of pure love, that love which knows no self, and needs no law, and has no measure. The third challenge of Jesus is his exposition of this Love.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us ponder these two incidents (xii. 1–8 ; xiii. 1–11), simply that the spirit and beauty of them may possess our souls.

'Let me be possessed by Love.'

II. The Secret of Love.

'He that loveth his life loseth it' (xii. 25).
'Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends' (xv. 13).

Notes.

1. A group of Greek pilgrims to Jerusalem having heard of Jesus, approached Philip, saying, 'We would see Jesus.' Philip, in some doubt, consulted Andrew, and together they carried the request to Jesus himself. The reply of Jesus seems to be irrelevant : 'The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone ; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it ; he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' 'If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there shall also my servant be' (xii. 24–26).

And again later: 'A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come; but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more her anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world' (xvi. 21).

2. Love is the response of the spirit to a law, a universal law, which demands the denial of self, not for the sake of self—as in some teaching—nor for the sake of discipline, nor as in itself an end in any sense, but for the sake of an object outside of self. Love is the state of the spirit which has been set free from the self-centred life, and has lost itself in other life.

A little grain of wheat falls into the ground, its self-life perishes; it lives again in the harvest.

A mother bears within her a life other than her own; she denies her self-life, bears anguish; she lives again in her child.

Jesus himself, lifted up, offering his own life for the life of the world; lives again in the 'all men drawn unto him.'

The life of the self is denied in each case for a true and positive and law-fulfilling end. The forth-going life is the abundant life.

3. But Mary with her sweet offering, the mother in her sacred suffering, the little grain in the earth, Jesus upon the Cross, and the followers of the law through all the ages are not considering law although they are fulfilling law. It is not because of law that they love.

It is of the essence of this plane of living upon which Jesus associates with himself all who dare to follow him, that it is entirely un-selfconscious; it does not

count cost; it flings itself out from itself in sheer divine joy of giving. God so loved that he gave his Son. Jesus so loved that he gave himself. Lovers do not talk of sacrifice. Sacrifice has done great things; but the one motive power which conquers all is love.

4. This is a world of unmitigated joy. Jesus poured out his love upon his little group of friends during those last days, and he poured his love upon the world from the Cross; and the words which he used about his own consciousness over and over again were—"My joy"; "My joy is fulfilled."

When the followers of Jesus come close to all that he is, and to all that he has spoken, and to all that he has done; when they have responded as they are able; their love will grow until it also will pour itself out upon himself and upon the world which he loves. We speak in our day about the 'Missionary motive'; the one and only missionary motive is LOVE.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us consider the answer we shall make to men and women who come to us with the Greeks' request: 'We would see Jesus.'

'Grant, O Lord, that we may offer all our service with a pure intention and a heart of love.'

'Send forth the hot flames of Thy love, to burn and consume the cloudy fantasies of my mind.'

SECTION IV.—THE CHALLENGE OF THE HIGHER LOVE

(Chapters xiv.–xvii.)

'There is nothing in all the world wherewith to buy the shedding abroad of Thy love in our hearts, but our heart's love.'—ST. TERESA.

'What is man but his loves and his thoughts? . . . So much as thou lovest God and thy neighbours and knowest them, so much is thy soul; if thou love little, little is thy soul; if thou love not at all, nothing at all is thy soul.'—
WALTER HILTON.

'It was never loving that emptied the heart.'

I. ONE LIFE.

'Because I live, ye shall live also' (xiv. 19).

Notes.

1. The life of Christ on earth was an interlude. Or we may say that the veil which separates the seen and temporal from the unseen and eternal was for a brief space drawn aside, and God, in His character,

purpose, action, was revealed. The necessary evanescence of such a revelation is obvious. Christ was in a world of time and space limitations, of human experience and discipline; but it was not possible for him, if it had been expedient for men, that he should remain in it. He came not to establish earthly relationship, but to accomplish spiritual relationship. It is of the spiritual relationship that Jesus speaks at the close of his ministry on earth; and his call to it forms the fourth and last challenge.

2. The Church has not forgotten, and never must forget, her relation to the transcendent Christ, King of the Kingdom of God on earth; but she has not of late sufficiently emphasised her relation to the immanent Christ, Lord of our interior life on earth. This Son of God and of man is, to the discerning spirit, so far as we are concerned, practically everything there is. His people need neither ascend nor descend to bring him within reach—which they often do—for he is very nigh.

3. The lives of our Lord and of his people are not many lives, they are one life. They do not live by his sympathy, or his love, or his bodily presence; they do not live by their own obedience, or devotion, or faith; they live by himself. It is not an easy lesson for unspiritual people to learn, and it is of his abounding grace that it is revealed gradually, and that they experience it long before they know it. Nevertheless, while they live honestly where they consciously are, it is well that they should realise something of what they may yet consciously attain. The

sons of God live by the Son of God. He lives on in this limited world in them. This fact is symbolised for all time in the Holy Supper, 'for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood; then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we be one with Christ and Christ with us.'

When we realise this an independent life is unthinkable. A striving and agonising to live a good life is unthinkable. The life of a son consists in an attitude of the spirit, and the region of effort—for effort there is and always will be—is to maintain that spirit. Receive the Son spirit, and, quite imperceptibly, we find that our whole being is interpenetrated by him; we are one with the Son, we are sons.

4. If to be a Christian means that Christ shall so possess you as to be the life of your living, what of human personality? Must that be merged in his? No love which is worthy of the name destroys personality; rather it disciplines, enriches, emphasises that which is individual and characteristic. But there is no need to philosophise here; it is the experience of the children of God that there is practically no limit to their freedom to become *themselves*, their true selves. 'Love and do what you like,' said St. Augustine. Peter became a glorified Simon, and Paul became a glorified Saul. If this be not taking place, if men and women fail to become the men and women they were intended to be, there is something very far wrong; we may take it as certain that Christ is *not* abiding in them.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us again meditate upon the symbolic 'I ams': those by which our exterior life may be lived; those of the more hidden life; and the 'I am' of the interior unity.

'To the eternal Faithfulness we commend us. Upon all may the great Peace descend.'

II. One Love.

'I . . . in the Father, ye in me, and I in you.' . . . 'He that loveth me shall be loved of the Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him' (xiv. 20–21).

'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you' (xv. 12).

'If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you' (xiii. 12–15).

Notes.

1. There are passages of great importance regarding the relationship between human sons and the Father. Study at leisure the whole passage xiv.–xvii., with this aspect of our Lord's teaching in

view. For example (xvi. 25–33), we find Jesus, who had hitherto been the representative of the Father, making known the Father's heart and will, urging His claims, and drawing men on to trust and love, changing his whole attitude. Henceforth he is rather man's representative with the Father than the Father's representative towards men. He has become by right of his life, death, victory, man's true and natural Brother. There is a beautiful human touch in verse 27 which ought not to be missed. The heart of the Father goes out, Jesus says, to those who have loved his beloved Son, the poor, ineffective human love of Peter and Thomas, as well as the big understanding love of Mary and John.

In the intercessory Prayer, which we hardly dare to touch, there is another aspect of the same truth. The disciples of Jesus were his, but all along he had known that they were his because they were the Father's. There had been a giving and a receiving within God. So poor a little group, so high a relationship.

2. Thus we are prepared for the closing word: the Father, and the Son, and the sons—the Family—are prophetically, and will be actually, perfected into One. Conflict will cease, love will reign; love Godwards and love brotherwards; for the two are inseparable. The day will come when the challenge of love will be accepted by the Family of God in its entirety; then shall all men know that we are the disciples of Christ, '*when we have love one to another*' (xiii. 35). 'He maketh Love His cognisance, His livery.'

Can we accept the challenge—the call of it, the urgency of it, the wonder of it ?

It is a separating challenge. It divided men sharply in Syria two thousand years ago, and it has done the same ever since. In a true sense the history of the Church has been the history of its treatment of the challenge of love. The same may be said of the history of individuals within the Church. When the keenness of the significance of love becomes blunted the Church becomes ineffective. Again and again the challenge has been misconceived, modified, forgotten ; always with tragic result. But the challenge still holds ; the challenge of Divine Love ; He loves, do we love ? If so, we are Godwards, Brotherwards, ONE.

For Thought and Prayer.

This challenge of practical love, which is inseparable from the fact of the Divine Fatherhood, is obviously flung before every Christian man and woman. Let us examine it, that we may accept it for ourselves—

(*a*) As it affects our mood and spirit, words and actions ; our sympathies and antipathies ; our dignities and susceptibilities ; our self-love.

(*b*) As it affects our nearer relationships ; family, society, business, church ; our national and our international contacts.

'Lord, who hast set in men's hearts the ideal of brotherhood
make known to all mankind
that in drawing closer to thee
and in this alone, can they draw close to their brethren.'

'We ask for the spirit of overflowing and diffusive peace through the peace-giving presence of Jesus our Lord. Prompt us to all the charities of active peace. Thy peace leave with us, thy peace give to us, O Christ.'

PART III

THE RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE

NTRODUCTORY NOTES

1. We have noted again and again that in John's conception the presence, appeal, and challenge of Jesus acted upon those who came in contact with him with the effect of discrimination; there was an acute sifting process, not in the form of judgment pronounced by Jesus, but rather of a subtle, involuntary self-judgment. With himself there was *rapport* or no *rapport;* with his message there was *will to know* or no *will to know;* and while choice was being made, character was being formed with marvellous rapidity.

Occasions of self-revelation became more and more marked as the months passed. Great crises are times of severe moral test; the greater the crisis the more severe the test; a supreme crisis becomes the application of a supreme test. It is not surprising to find that during the week of the trials and crucifixion of Jesus men and women were revealing, whether for good or for evil, their naked character.

In studying the response made by men to Jesus when he offered himself as the Word of God, therefore, we may confine our attention to the record of Passion Week. Three groups here meet us, all more or less directly associated with the act of the death

of Jesus: the Group of the outer world: the Group of the Jewish Church: and the Group of his own followers. This is the simple historic division.

2. When, however, we come to the passage with this classification in our thoughts, two notes of interest emerge: *first*, the curious fact that the classification does not hold throughout: each Group contains those whom with our knowledge we should place in another: the inquiring Greeks were very near, if not within, the circle of the followers. We find Nicodemus, to our surprise, ranging himself at the moment of defeat within the circle; the circle itself contained a traitor. *Second*, Jesus, in his private conversation with his disciples on the eve of his betrayal, spoke of two Groups only, '*the World*' and '*his friends*,' thus bringing the Church under the category of the world—a parable of solemn meaning for all times.

SECTION I.—THE RESPONSE OF THE WORLD

(Chapters xii., xiii., xviii., xix.)

> ' There are two vast spacious things
> The which to measure it doth more behove,
> Yet few there are that sound them—Sin, and Love.'
>
> GEORGE HERBERT.

> ' Many were the nations who committed that sin . . . for the nations therefore was his sorrow great.'—
>
> ANGELA OF FOLIGNO.

I. THE RESPONSE OF THE GENTILES.

> ' Sir, we would see Jesus ' (xii. 20–33).

Notes.

1. The first point of contact between ' the world ' and Jesus occurred on Palm Sunday, in the half-recorded elusive incident of the desire of certain Greek pilgrims to meet with Jesus. It is an incident around which imagination cannot fail to play.

The psychological conditions in Jerusalem must have been intensely interesting to the keen Greek mind. They would hear of the wonderful personality of the Galilean Prophet, of his works and his teaching,

and of the conflicting opinions which met his claim to Messiahship. On the other hand, they must have known that the religious leaders were bent upon his destruction, for reasons which they as outsiders could not have fully understood.

2. They were probably men of deep religious earnestness, since they were proselytes of the most earnest religion which the world had ever known; and it might well be that they had a more serious motive than mere curiosity. Many of the proselytes to the Jewish faith must have desired to find some teacher of broader outlook than the rabbis, whether of Jerusalem or Alexandria. Was there no wider solution of the mystery of God's Purpose towards mankind at large than that of the somewhat inhospitable 'proselyte' system of Judaism?

3. Be that as it may, this request to Philip represents an appeal from the Gentile world to Jesus. We do not know whether the Greeks met Jesus, or whether they heard from His own lips the words with which he replied when their request was brought to him—words which contain his philosophy of life. We have no recorded result of their visit: but we do know that Jesus foreshadowed for those who had ears to hear the world-wide future for which, we are tempted to hope, the Greeks were yearning. There are no Jewish bounds acknowledged here. The dying grain bears much fruit. Any man, serving and following with the Son, is the honoured child of the Father. 'I, being lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' And, although the triumphant words of verse 31 have a more inclusive, further-

reaching meaning, we may surely allow ourselves to hope that Jesus even then saw in the Greek proselytes the firstfruits of his great Gentile ingathering. If so, the world lost, and the Inner Circle gained that day.

For Thought and Prayer.

'Faith cometh by hearing.' Let us meditate upon the summons of the waiting world, the Gospel which is ours to pass on, and the conditions in us which alone can make that Gospel believable. See Jesus' words to Andrew and Philip.

'Speak, thou availing Christ, and fill this pause.'

II. The Response of Pilate.

'I am innocent.' 'Behold the Man' (xviii. 28–xix. 16).
'What is truth' (xviii. 38).

Notes.

1. Pilate affirmed his innocence. It must have been difficult to assure himself of it. He was not guilty in the sense in which the Jewish leaders were guilty; he had not their previous knowledge or training, he owned no allegiance to their God. 'He

that delivered me unto thee,' said Jesus, 'hath greater sin.'

But the historic fact remains, that this judge condemned Jesus to death not only without a verdict, but after repeated declarations of the prisoner's innocence (xviii. 38, and xix. 4, 6). He strove again and again to evade responsibility for the death sentence (xviii. 31, etc.); but in the last issue the responsibility rests with him. He might wash his hands indeed, but the stain cleaves to them till this day.

2. Jesus never appeared before Pilate strictly as a prisoner at the bar. Their intercourse was private and conversational. They held two conversations; the first related to the charge of treason against Rome; the second, to the charge of blasphemy, and offence against the Jewish law (xix. 7). It is possible, I think, to trace in Pilate a growing respect for Jesus. His first question was probably asked in a tone of not unkind contempt of the claims of this young Galilean peasant—'Art *thou* the King of the Jews?' But a later question—'Whence art thou?' asked in natural heathen alarm, lest this Man who so stirred men's passions should be an incarnation of the Jewish God, has much more of serious interest in it. It is notable also that his desire to release the prisoner grew with his impotence to deal with Jewish clamour. Never for a moment did Pilate judge Jesus guilty of any crime.

Failing in his feeble efforts to evade responsibility for a verdict, Pilate yielded—to his fate, to circumstances, to an ungovernable mob; he must have

made many excuses to his conscience, none of which, we may be sure, stood him in good stead. He revealed his sense of his ignoble failure during the cruel and despicable closing scene, when, losing all the dignity of a responsible judge, he scoffed at accusers and prisoner alike, and closed the case (xix. 13–16).

3. Pilate chose for himself the lower easy rather than the higher difficult path; but his responsibility went far beyond his individual act. For Pilate acted in name of Rome, and for the boasted Roman justice. Literally, therefore, his delivery of Jesus into the hands of the executioners was a representative act. In name of Rome a traitor was set free. In name of Rome an innocent man was crucified. Rome represented the highest known ideal of judgment, and the mis-carriage of justice on the part of any Roman official involved the honour of Rome.

Rome in her turn represented the civilised world, and in the dishonour of Rome lay the dishonour of man. Here again we are face to face with the awful fact of the representative nature of every act. As the Jews acted for the Church, so Pilate acted for the world, and the spirit of the world has throughout the centuries since the day of the Crucifixion, ratified in effect, if not in word, the decision of Pilate.

4. Again and again we have noticed that our Lord reversed all human ideals and conceptions of greatness. Here surely we have the greatest reversal of all. Not the dignity of the Sanhedrim, nor the majesty of the representative of Imperial Rome, but the dignity and the majesty of the almost silent prisoner impress us. The Crucified One is the Judge;

and we, who have learned in some measure to understand the hidden meanings of that day's event, know that the Saviour King was then most Kingly, most victorious over his enemies, when they had apparently vanquished him. The Prince of the world stood before his judgment seat, and his sentence was pronounced.

For Thought and Prayer.

The modern mind tends to evade the doctrine of human responsibility, and to claim for God either that He is solely responsible for men's actions, or that He is entirely lenient towards them. Let us consider whether this doctrine is compatible with the action of the world during Passion Week? Let us seriously endeavour to know the truth.

'Lord, into what devious paths of error do our souls wander, and to what dangers they are exposed on every hand when they stray away from Thee. But, while they keep within Thy hiding-place, O Most High, they are safe.'

III. The Response of the Irresponsible.

'Let us cast lots' (xix. 2, 3, 23, 24, 32–34).

Notes.

Responsible Church and responsible World joined hands and did their worst. What of the effect of

this example upon irresponsible men? If Jewish leaders condemned their innocent fellow-countryman, and Rome's representative gave effect to their verdict, how would menial officers entrusted with the execution of the sentence act?

Jesus had suffered hours of weary sorrowful waiting for the end. He had been passed from Annas to Caiaphas, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to King Herod, at whose hands he had suffered every possible indignity; he had been returned to Pilate, suffered the cruel scourge, twice he had confronted the furious mob. There remained, we should have thought, no possible additional suffering save that of the Cross itself. But the soldiers, in whose eyes through much bloody duty manhood had lost all sacredness, chose to have their share. With royal robe, crown, and mocking homage, they repeated the scene of Herod's court; it was amusing thus to torture a helpless victim. Later also, at the Cross, it was nothing to them that he suffered while they divided his garments amongst them and gambled for his robe.

The world was not actively antagonistic, she was only indifferent to the Christ. She shielded herself behind her neutrality. But neutrality was impossible. She was immediately responsible for the brutality of those Roman soldiers. She was ultimately responsible for the death of her Saviour. Indifference may easily become the mother of the darkest sin.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us consider more fully the grave fact that 'none of us liveth to himself,' *i.e.* that all our thoughts, words, and actions are, in a true sense, within their range of influence, responsible not for themselves only, but for their children.

'Lord, I trust Thou hast forgiven the bad examples I have set before others, be also pleased to pardon me the sins which they have committed by my bad examples.'

SECTION II.—THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

(Chapters xiii.–xx.)

'There are three definite stages in the evolution of the false: suggestion, iteration, affirmation.'

'What we call degeneracy is often but the unveiling of what was there all the time: and the evil we could become, we are.'

I. The Jewish Church.

'They did not believe' (xii. 37).

'They could not believe' (xii. 39).

Notes.

1. The Jewish Church, which was the Jewish nation, was at this time both active and zealous; but she had stiffened as human societies tend to do, under the grip of a dead hand. She was bound up with her past in forms and traditions which had long ceased to have living meaning; and for her future her only desire lay in the realisation of a greatly narrowed and lowered and materialised conception of the vision of her ancient seers. She had, therefore, become incapable of bravely considering a larger

and more spiritual interpretation of her own religious or national vocation.

2. Jesus was rejected by the Church. He 'departed and was hidden from them' (xii. 36). The idea suggested is that the darkness (35) had fallen upon the Church, and that the truth could not now be revealed to her. It is upon this awful fact that St. John comments in these verses. There were two aspects, he tells us, to the rejection of Jesus.

'They did not believe': this is its historic aspect.

'They could not believe': this is its prophetic aspect.

These are two aspects of one fact; they are not two facts.

'They did not believe,' notwithstanding witnesses, signs, proofs, offers; notwithstanding the powerful challenge; notwithstanding a Divine glory which flashed forth again and again in word and act; notwithstanding the foreshadowings of it all by their own seers (41). This is the self-judgment of the members of the Jewish Church; a visible historic fact.

But all history has its inner significance. Fate, say some, who seek to relieve conscience of responsibility and at the same time to explain the happenings of life. 'God is the Doer, and the Causer to do,' is the subtle saying of India, by which all moral responsibility, whether common or personal, is referred to God. The Jewish people to whom had been sent wise prophetic teachers, who had taught them that destiny lies in character, had no such excuse to make.

'They could not believe,' because before the disciplinary blinding and hardening, came deliberate self-blinding and self-hardening. That they could not believe was their inevitable self-inflicted punishment.

They were the most religious people of their day: but they were of the unbelieving world nevertheless.

For Thought and Prayer.

Still we are faced with the effects of human responsibility; here, the effects upon ourselves. Let us consider the effect here noted: that our 'does not' becomes in the end our 'cannot.'

'Give me to guard myself, but, Lord, guard my guarding of myself.'

II. Hosanna!

'Hosanna! Save, we pray! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord' (xii. 12–19).

Notes.

1. The Jewish Church expressed herself in two memorable words. The first of these was spoken by the crowd which went out from Jerusalem to meet and welcome Jesus on Palm Sunday. These were not men and women of Jerusalem; they had come

up to Jerusalem for the Feast, and were probably for the most part Galileans (cf. Matt. xxi. 8–11; Mark xi. 8–10. See also for the relation of the crowds to Jesus—all referring to Passion Week—Mark xi. 32; Luke xix. 48; Matt. xxi. 46). They knew Jesus well; his name was a household word with many of them. He had been their Physician, Teacher, Friend. Hundreds of them had had good cause to remember his visits to their homes, at Cana, Nain, and the lake-side villages. It was very fitting that 'when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,' they should go out to meet him with their palm branches and their acclamations—

'Hosanna! Save, we pray! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.'

2. A crowd has, as has often been said, a curious corporate character which has little or no reference to the characters of the individuals who compose it. Emotion and impulse, not thought and reason, sway its action. Break up the crowd and the spell of the emotion which gave it its character and guided its movements is also broken.

3. Where were they, these enthusiastic men and women of Galilee, when the testing-day came? Some perhaps were of the 'four hundred brethren'; but we cannot be far wrong in assuming that the greater number had never risen above the impulse of the crowd in their relations with Jesus. They had loved and trusted their gracious Friend, and now they ecstatically hailed him Saviour and King; but the individual hearts and wills had not been won to a

decisive act; these men and women were not his for better or for worse.[1]

They did not belong to the inner circle.

For Thought and Prayer.

Still another aspect of responsibility. Let us meditate upon it.

'Teach us, O Lord, to begin our works with fear, to go on with obedience, and to finish them in love.'

III. Crucify Him!

'Crucify him!' 'We have no king but Cæsar' (xviii., xix.).

Notes.

1. The passage from rejection to murder was a single step. The second was the act of which the first was the impulse.

[1] An Indian Brahman, educated in a Christian College, was so drawn to Christ, that after preparation the date of his baptism was fixed. On the evening before, owing to family opposition, he withdrew. He remained a Christian in belief to the end of his life. But he told me, with tears raining down his face, that from the moment of his withdrawal, which he regarded himself as an act of denial, all his desire towards Christ had left him.

The crucifixion of Jesus was a profoundly pious and patriotic act (xviii. 14, xi. 50). Whether Caiaphas and the Jews succeeded in convincing themselves of the purity of their motives matters very little. As we have seen, that they did not, and that they could not, were practically the same thing. Their attitude towards God, their ambitions and ideals, were such that they may have reached the awful condition of an honest conviction that they were doing their duty towards their God and their nation by delivering Jesus Christ to death. There was certainly an attempt to persuade themselves and the world that the life and work of Jesus were a danger to the commonwealth.

2. The Passover was the great national and patriotic festival of the year, and John notes, with an irony which cuts deep, how carefully its ritual was observed. They could not enter into the Judgment Hall ' that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover ' (xviii. 28). And later, they desired to hasten the death and remove the body, that it ' should not remain on the Cross upon the Sabbath, for the day of that Sabbath was a high day.' Fathers, mothers, and children sat down to their Passover feast apparently with no other thought than one of relief that the troubler of the nation's peace was safely out of reach—dead and buried.

3. The rejection of Messiah led the Church into strange choices, professions, actions. The scene before the Prætorium suggests a maddened mob, smarting under bitter wrong; it is difficult as we read to keep before us the fact that the object of

this ungovernable fury was a gracious young Healer, Teacher, Friend of the people, or that these were the responsible leaders of a civilised nation. We are bound to hope that many members of the Sanhedrim, if not courageous enough to stand for truth and justice, at the least absented themselves from this scene. Surely Gamaliel (Acts v. 34–39) was not present, certainly Nicodemus was not.

(*a*) Their first choice was Barabbas rather than Jesus (xviii. 39, 40). Barabbas was, in all probability, a Jewish bandit imprisoned by the Roman authority as dangerous to the peace of the country, a traitor to Rome, and a man who held human life and property, law and order, in little esteem. Hatred of Jesus had carried the Jews far beyond reason when they made this choice. For, in its essence, what was it? It was the expression of their moral choice. They chose lawlessness, unrighteousness, sin. They rejected holiness, truth, love.

(*b*) Their second choice was Cæsar rather than Jesus (xix. 15, also verse 12). This was the expression of their national, that is, in this case, their religious choice. The peculiar function of the Jewish nation was to show to the world a God-governed people. So they understood their calling, and so they professed to live.

Cæsar was the symbol of the Roman Empire, and the Roman Empire represented literally as well as figuratively the great world-power of the time. Called upon to take a public oath of allegiance, they loudly professed loyalty to Rome, and swore that Cæsar was their only king. They were taken at their

word. The hated Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, and the grip of Rome upon the Jewish capital became ever firmer and firmer until the 'holy city' was destroyed and the apostate people were effectually subjugated.

4. These Choices appear to have been made in the heat of a great excitement, but we have seen that they were being made through all the long centuries of their history. Israel invariably, both in moral and in spiritual matters, fell far below her opportunities. This was the burden of the messages of the prophets. It was the burden of Christ's own teaching. The apparently sudden choices of life are never really sudden. They have been unconsciously, it may be, but none the less really, prepared for by the decisions of an age or of a life.

Jesus himself had warned the Jews of another aspect of the awfulness of the choice made by them. In accepting responsibility for this last crowning deed of apostasy they became responsible for all past choices. They simply filled up the measure of the nation's sin.

The awfulness of the issues involved in their choice was not realised by the Jewish leaders. They stood responsible not for themselves alone, but for the nation; and they lightly accepted the sponsorship of their sin for all future generations in the terrible words, 'His blood be upon us, and upon our children.'

So decisions point backward to the long past as well as forward to the unknown future. It is an awful thing to live.

There is no light at all in this study. It is the

darkest page of human history, and it is right that we should realise its darkness.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us realise the darkness of this darkest page of human history; but let us realise also the brightness of its light. Let us meditate upon these words: 'The Cross, though it has at its heart a collision and a contradiction, . . . opens its arms to the four winds; it is a signpost for free travellers' (G. K. Chesterton).

'Lord, before I commit a sin, it seems to me so shallow that I may wade through it dry shod; but when I have committed it it often seems so deep that I cannot escape without drowning. Lend me, O Lord, a reed out of Thy sanctuary truly to measure.'

'May the power of the Holy Cross go before us, and lead us on unfaltering to the end.'

SECTION III.—THE RESPONSE OF THE INNER CIRCLE

(Chapters xiii.–xx.)

'Sense may be no judge of the bewailed absence of Christ. Do but turn thine eye, O thou religious soul, and see Jesus standing by thee though thou knewest not that it was Jesus. His habit was not his own. Sometimes it pleases our Saviour to appear not like himself; his holy disguises are our trials. Sometimes he will seem a stranger, sometimes an enemy. . . . Happy is he that can discern his Saviour in all forms.'—

BISHOP HALL.

'Our failing is dreadful, our falling is shameful, and our dying is sorrowful; yet in all this the sweet eye of pity is lifted never off us, nor the work of mercy ceaseth.'—

JULIAN OF NORWICH.

Get thee stableness of Soul.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

It now remains to us to join the inner circle of the disciples of Jesus—the few chosen men and women who had accepted him, and had to some extent entered into his spirit—and to follow them through the experiences of that, for them, terrible week.

The actions of Jesus had been very strange. They were prepared, all save one, to be loyal to the death if need were, for their love was true and deep; but

we catch once and again a very natural note of dissent, of the conscious opposition of human nature to ignominious failure and defeat.

His teaching had also been quite incomprehensible, especially on the evening of the Passover Feast, when hope had died within them and 'sorrow had filled their hearts.' It was good, for their sake, not his, that he should leave them; he had service to render to them elsewhere; but he should return in some vague mystical sense, as a Spirit Helper and Presence: meantime, he would leave with them a legacy, an unsubstantial, dream-like legacy of 'peace' and 'joy,' accompanied by an experience, possibly not unlike his own, of 'tribulation.'

Did they wish for any of the gifts of which he spoke? They did not; they wished for himself. They were very human, they had loved the happy fellowship of these past years, and they wished for nothing better than that it should go on until he should be in a position to prove and to claim his Messiahship, and reign over a free and devoted chosen people.

Then in swift sequence followed betrayal, trials, verdict, ignominious death, and awful pause; and then a bewildering re-appearance—the same yet not the same.

Never in the world's history had the followers of any king, lord, or master, been subjected to so searching an experience. From beginning to end the week must have seemed like a long, tragic nightmare.

This Gospel is nowhere more vivid than in its portraiture of those bewildered men in their time of

storm and stress. One by one each seems to stand out, and, as the response of his spirit to the way by which his Master led him, reveals that which was in him: treachery, perplexity, denial, doubt, secret devotion, blind devotion, and, in the case of one only, possibly two, a perfect understanding and sympathy.

I. Treachery (xii. 4; xiii. 21; xviii. 2).

Jesus was troubled in spirit, and said, 'One of you shall betray me.' . . . Judas then, having received the sop went out straightway; and it was night (xiii. 21–30).

Notes.

1. On the threshold of the week we meet the man who stands alone in the history of men—the traitor of traitors. Who can tell why this man found a place among the Apostles?

The treachery of a friend—and only a friend can become a traitor—must have been a terrible experience to Jesus. To have watched the gradual, sure deterioration of character, until the basest act possible to man had become possible, this was indeed one of the bitterest elements of the preparation for the Cross.

2. Judas did not begin his life of apostleship with treason in his heart. It is impossible to conceive of him as a true man, but very possibly his lack of truth was unconscious at the first. Self-deception is not a difficult attainment to human nature. Judas was an ambitious man. He probably joined the little company of disciples with a true hope that Jesus was indeed—though a Galilean and a peasant—the promised Deliverer, and that attachment to his cause would mean advancement for himself. We find no hint that he was ever touched to high issues: he had none save worldly hopes and purposes.

3. Gradually, but possibly before any other apostle realised it, this one Judæan apostle saw that the Master would follow a life-plan of his own, irrespective of Jewish hopes, and that Jerusalem would never accept him. Conflict, probably to the death, was inevitable. He foresaw, even if he were not at an early stage in the Jewish counsels, triumph for the Sanhedrim, crushing defeat for Jesus; and his heart and mind, never truly won, very easily changed sides. After all, whether he aided or not, Jesus was moving steadfastly to his fate. Thus the traitor's task grew to be possible. Attempt to live a double life, and the lower will gradually but surely triumph. From the daily betrayal of the trust reposed in Judas by the little commonwealth to the sale of the Master of it, when that Master had disappointed expectations, how many steps were needed?

4. Men who deliberately choose an evil course have a natural instinctive dislike for those who know it.

In the case of Judas, this natural emotion must have been intensified sevenfold by his knowledge of the perfect truth and goodness of Jesus; we may be sure that Judas hated Jesus, even while still to all appearance one of his followers.

But how did Judas endure that his feet should be laved by the Master whom he had already sold? Was he actually unmoved by the evident distress of Jesus in his presence at that last common meal? Was he really able to bear the last appeal, the friendly act of the offered sop, and even to swallow it? If so, Jesus knew at once that the blackest darkness of all had already fallen, Evil had indeed triumphed, it was indeed night.

The Response of Judas to Jesus was the traitor's kiss.

For Thought and Prayer.

Let us meditate upon the distinction between penitence and remorse.

'Thou knowest the dangers of our wilful nature, and strivest by greatest fears and greatest hopes, and all the wisest arts of love and bounty, to draw us to Thyself, and endow us with Thy Kingdom. (Unhappy we, whose forwardness required so strange proceeding to force upon us our own salvation! Happy we whose wants have met so kind a hand, that needed but our emptiness to engage Him to fill us!)'

II. Perplexity (xiv.–xvi.).

'Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?' (xiv. 5).

'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us' (xiv. 8).

'Lord, what is come to pass, that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?' (xiv. 22).

'What is this that he saith unto us, "a little while"? We know not what he saith' (xvi. 18).

'Lo, now speakest thou plainly . . . now we know . . .' (xvi. 29).

Notes.

It is not surprising that one and another, sometimes the whole company of the disciples, should have given expression to a sense of almost intolerable perplexity. For they could have found little present comfort in the farewell words of Jesus: these were for a future day, not for the day of blind grief. The words quoted above, the last the most pathetic of all, in its lack of understanding, yet desire to seem to understand, let us into their mood. We know not the way; we know not the Father; we do not understand mystical relationships (nor do we desire them); why should there be even 'a little while' of separation? Then the flash of apparent illumination, and the darkness settled down upon them once more.

1. The disciples were echoing the long cry of the world for the shedding of some light upon the mystery of life and death. A vague instinct of the heart denies that this little life ends all; but give us assurance of the mind; give us a strong hand to guide

us as we go out into the darkness. 'We know not the way.'

2. The problem of Philip received a gentle rebuke. It is probable that conscious personal knowledge of the Father could not have been reached even by the disciples until the supreme Act of love should interpret the Heart of the Father; but some sense of the Fatherhood of God must surely have stolen into their souls while their Master had without ceasing, by word and symbol and life, striven to reveal it. 'So long, Philip, and not yet known?'

3. 'I will manifest myself.' 'I will send a Paraclete.' 'And it is but a little while.' Here, as before, the promise seemed unreal, unsatisfying, distant, when compared with the present good of the present fellowship.

Poor, bewildered, sorrow-stricken little company, to whom the whole mystery of the Divine Life was spoken in advance of the experience which should make it either comprehensible or desirable!

But they were on the eve of the New Era, which brought in the new Christ and the new world; which annihilated space and time, and rendered sight and touch and speech unneedful for fellowship, and the 'I am' of the spiritual Christ became a simple fact of constant experience.

'I am the Way, the Truth, the Life.'

'I am the Vine, ye are the branches.'

'I in them, Thou in me, perfected into One.'

For Thought and Prayer.

Our fathers loved these chapters (xiv.–xvii.) as the very Holy Place of the Faith. They are probably less real to us. But let us read them slowly and glean what we can from them of peace and comfort and joy.

'Because we know thee little, we love thee little . . . and because we love thee little, we rejoice little in thee . . . For we are in the exterior things, thou in the interior; we are in temporal things, thou in spiritual. . . . When shall these contrarieties ever be able to meet?' 'Make all thy people more worthy of thy peace, more worthy to ask for it.'

III. Denial (xiii.–xviii.).

'Dost thou wash my feet?' 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.' 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head' (xiii. 1–10).

Notes.

Thomas, Philip, and Judas expressed the emotions of the majority, but there was one at the least besides Judas Iscariot who was not even in a condition to be perplexed; and the story of that one is told in detail.

1. Simon the son of John was in dangerous mood

on the evening of the Last Supper, and the experiences of that evening were a test which he entirely failed to stand. He was at the mercy of his conflicting emotions.

He had forgotten that first of all lessons for a disciple, acceptance of and trust in the Master's wisdom in its exactness and entirety.

Had not Jesus the best right to decide both for himself and for his hot-headed follower? Strange, if we but think of it, that Peter, calling him 'Master,' and 'Lord,' was yet for ever either refusing his plan, or, in a sudden emotional moment, offering to him that for which he did not ask. He was the slave of his self-will.

2. In [his self-preoccupation] Peter forgot Jesus' habit of teaching by means of object lessons, and thus lost the point of this lesson. He, Peter, was too humble to allow his Lord to wash *his* feet; he was in fact quite superior in humility to those who had permitted it. And so for that time he lost the thought of the high place assigned by Jesus to a lowly mutual service. Again, he, Peter, would exceed his fellows in yielding to the Lord's will: he would submit 'hands and head' as well as feet; and thus, self-filled his mind to the exclusion of the lesson of the comforting distinction between the 'bathed' and the 'washed.'

The lesson of the feet-washing was lost, the more solemn lesson of Judas' dismissal was lost, Peter's self shut out all else.

3. How hotly he denied the possibility of disloyalty, even while already the attitude of his mind was

disloyal! Moral courage is a grace gained through a deep consciousness of the possibilities of failure; the self-confident can never be morally strong. Peter was morally weak, else he need not have so loudly proclaimed his courage on that night of sore temptation; that he refused to take warning was an aggravation of his pride. As the day of temptation had approached, the desire of Jesus to help him became more and more manifest; and now at the last the words were more than a warning, they carried judgment in them. 'In very truth I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow (three or four hours at furthest) till thou hast denied me thrice.' It was of no avail. A little later he was found asleep when asked to watch, offered defence where it could not possibly avail, and, following his captive Master 'afar off,' prepared the way for the fulfilling of his sad prophecy.

Yet Peter loved his Master. At least, he was on the side of Jesus. He was not sent away from the supper-room, and when he sinned there was room for repentance and restoration.

Those of us who have studied our own natures will realise how each of these failures on the part of Peter weakened his moral force. Peter's fall was not a sudden thing; few falls are. 'Those who are shy of Jesus are in a fair way to deny him.'

4. He was in the wrong place, as well as in the wrong spirit, when temptation assailed him. He arrived at the High Priest's palace after the examination of Jesus had begun; and John, thinking to do his friend a service, gained for him admittance to

the courtyard (xviii. 15). But the courtyard was both too near Jesus and too far away from him to be safe. John's well-meant interference in his behalf was the worst service which he could have rendered to Peter at that moment.

So Peter, amongst the scoffers, became a scoffer. To die for Jesus in the upper room seemed an easy thing, to stand for him in presence of laughing servant-maids proved impossible. One writes that Peter was 'swept by an emotion,' he could protest with the loudest that he loved his Master; but he was 'swept too by a fear,' he could not face the jeers of the servants, made at the expense of that Master when a captive.

He might well have despaired when the cock's loud crow awakened conscience and heart. He also, like Judas, filled with remorse, might well have taken his own life as he thought over that night's sin. But the Lord's prayer had been beforehand with the sin; and the moment of his awakening was also the moment of his 'turning again' (Luke xxii. 61).

For Thought and Prayer.

Peter is so typical a man that all of us may find ourselves in him at one time or another. Let us therefore for our good meditate upon this history more fully, comparing all the accounts of it with this.

'Thou dealest with us above all desert, and above all we dare hope or ask.

'Lord, make me a saint, and do not spare me in the making.'

IV. Doubt (xx. 24–29).

'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe' (xx. 25).

Notes.

1. The contrast between the characters of Thomas and Peter, as shown in word and attitude, forms an interesting study.

'Let us go that we may die with him,' said Thomas, when Jesus for Lazarus' sake proposed a return to the dangers of Judæa. 'I am ready to go with thee both to prison and to death,' said Peter, but in a far different mood.

'Why cannot I follow thee now?' Peter arrogantly asked when Jesus hinted at coming separation. And Thomas, anxious and perplexed, said, 'Lord, we know not whither thou goest, how then know we the way?'

2. Thomas did not love less. There is indeed the accent of true devotion in these anxious words. The difficulty was that he could not understand the Master's motives or words before the Crucifixion; and, clearly, the Crucifixion itself seemed to him to be the end of all his hopes. When on Easter day the apostles were gathered together, filled with wonder at the day's tidings, Thomas was not of their number. There is temptation to find something significant in his absence. We are tempted to imagine, perhaps

because of some instinctive sympathy with his supposed mood, that he was on that day brooding alone over the shattering of his hopes, saying with another disappointed follower of the crucified Jesus, 'We had hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel.' However this may have been, Thomas lost the Easter joy through his absence, and spent another week in miserable doubt, which grew into positive unbelief when those who had seen the Lord told of their joyful experience. The evidence of hearsay he would not accept; he must have the evidence of his own senses. This was his mood. But it must be remembered that it was a mood of sorrow, not of antagonism; and Jesus' response to his doubt was exceeding satisfying, his reproof of it exceeding tender.

The reproof of Jesus reveals to us the point of Thomas' failure towards his Lord. When again and again Jesus was seen and talked with by trustworthy witnesses, there was surely evidence offered to any one who did not see him that his words had come true, that he had returned to them. This evidence Thomas rejected, and in plain terms stated the kind of evidence which alone he would accept. There are, therefore, two kinds of evidence, one of which Jesus reckoned far nobler than the other.

(*a*) 'Except I see and touch I will not believe. This is my standard. True, the Lord said he should return; true, Peter, John, Mary, and the rest appear to have had a wonderful vision, and to be satisfied; true, my very heart cries out for him who has gone; but I will trust only when I can see and touch.' But where is the scope for trust after vision and touch

have been granted? He had lost his chance of trust when he made terms of his own for it.

(*b*) 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' The evidence was ample. There was the word of the Master himself, which had never yet failed; there was the testimony of Mary, Peter, and John, the two disciples with whom Jesus had travelled to Emmaus, and lastly of the ten. All these independent and honourable witnesses had themselves seen and talked with—some had eaten with—the risen Jesus. The gentle reproof of Jesus might have been more severe had he not read the loving, despondent heart of the man who must see and touch.

3. Thomas' confession when convinced was the glad cry of love at rest, as well as of sorrow for unbelief. What a wealth of satisfied longing and of loyal devotion is in it—'My Lord and my God'! Once again the contrast between Thomas and Peter suggests itself. This man, who fain would have believed throughout, had at once the full expression of his homage to offer to the Christ he had again found. Peter, whose heart and will made him a traitor to his own convictions, had lost his assurance, and dared not venture upon any more loud protestations of worship. Each learned his own lesson.

For Thought and Prayer.

'It is good for us to hold fast by thee, but do thou so increase in us the desire of good, that the hope which joins us to thee may not be shaken by any wavering of faith, but may endure in steadfastness of love.'

V. Secret Devotion (xix. 38–42 ; see also xii. 42, 43).

Joseph of Arimathea . . . a disciple . . . but secretly, for fear of the Jews (xix. 38).

Nicodemus, he who at the first came to him by night (xix. 39).

Notes.

1. Discipleship of the Galilean Peasant-Prophet, signs of life, word, and deed notwithstanding, had never been easy for men of education and social position. Only the common people heard him gladly. 'Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble,' were called, and of these nameless believers the record is not a very honourable one.

2. Two men from within the Sanhedrim are mentioned as having been of the inner circle, Joseph of Arimathea, 'a disciple, but secretly for fear of the Jews,' and Nicodemus. 'Death,' says Bishop Hall, 'let that man loose. He hates to be a night bird any longer, but boldly flies forth. He will be now as liberal in his odours as he was before niggardly in his confession.' Secret discipleship is a quite abnormal condition ; unwholesome in every sense. Confession of the faith that is in men is the biggest service they can render to the cause to which they are committed in their hearts. It means far more to the cause of Christ that a once blind man should say, 'Whereas I was blind, now I see,' than that Nicodemus should give a general dissertation at a meeting of Sanhedrim upon the absolute justice enforced by Jewish law

(vii. 50–52). Nicodemus would have been a stronger and a happier man if he had made his confession upon the moment of his conviction.

3. Courage is sometimes found during great crises which was lacking during easier days. Hard times draw out the best that is in some natures. The response of these two men to the Challenge of Jesus was that in the day of his defeat and death they came openly to his side. The service rendered to him may have been simply a service of love rendered to a dead Friend, but it was good for him and for them that they took their place even as mourners with the mourners.

'O happy Joseph,' adds Bishop Hall, 'thou hadst the honour to be landlord of the Lord of Life.'

For Thought and Prayer.

A good old man was wont to remark that it troubled him that he had never suffered for his faith, and wondered whether his confession had not been sufficiently clear. It is a problem for these days of a weakened Church. Let us consider it.

'Give us understanding to know thee, wisdom to find thee, a life which may please thee, perseverance faithfully to wait upon thee, and trustfulness to embrace thee to the end.'

VI. Blind Devotion (xx. 1–18) and the Love which understood (xii. 1–8).

Mary (Magdalen) was standing without, at the tomb, weeping. . . . She turned herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus (xx. 11, 14).

Mary (of Bethany) . . . anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment (xii. 3).

I

Notes.

1. If the tradition be true, the relation between Mary and Jesus was a very peculiar one. A sinful, degraded woman, outcasted from respectable society, she had come into contact with him and found in him hope for a changed life. She longed greatly for an opportunity of letting him know of her penitence and love, and found it on the occasion of the cold hospitality offered to him by Simon the Pharisee. She hastened to fill up that which was lacking in his courtesy by washing with tears, and wiping with her hair, and anointing with her precious flask, the feet of him whom she now worshipped afar off. We know the end and what Jesus did for this woman. A new life opened before her, with new aspirations and loyalties; and before long the despised outcast was one of the followers of Jesus—received as such not alone by him, but by the whole circle.

2. Mary was with the last of the disciples to leave the beloved Body. She stayed with the others, and saw the burial. She and her companions were also first at the grave on Easter morning. They came prepared to anoint the Body. Another Mary had

been beforehand with her, and had already anointed Jesus against the day of his burial. Mary's spices came too late.

The order of the incidents is a little confusing, but apparently when the women found the tomb empty, they went away, Mary alone lingering in, or returning to, the garden. Meantime Peter and John had discovered the empty grave and hastened away with the news. Mary again drew near, as if to watch again at the sacred spot. The thought of Resurrection had not laid hold of her, as it had of the two apostles.

3. Mary loved much, and came to the grave to express her love; but her love was blind. All hope, all joy, were buried for her in Jesus' grave, and her heart was breaking with sorrow; but it was for one who like other friends must die, who must be tenderly anointed and buried for ever out of her sight, and whose grave would henceforth be the shrine of her devotion. For all her great love, Mary was blind.

She mistook her Lord for the gardener, and even failed to recognise his voice when he addressed her. Only when he spoke her own name came recognition and the glad cry, 'Rabboni!'

But, even then, Mary's fuller vision had not come to her. Her eyes had to be opened not only to the vision of a risen Jesus, but of a changed relation with him. The changed Body typified a greater change. Hitherto Mary had known her Master 'after the flesh,' she had been allowed to wash and to wipe his feet; now she may not touch his feet until she recognises the fact that the knowledge after the flesh

is over. The love is not lessened, but the relation is changed to a deeper, permanent, more spiritual relation. Mary and the rest must now learn the meaning of that hard lesson which had so perplexed them on the eve of his death.

II

1. One response had met Jesus on the threshold of the week of his suffering which must have given to him the purest joy. Mary of Bethany seems to have been a woman of few words; but she had, as silent women often have, both a great heart and a clear vision. She understood Jesus. She realised that her fitting place was at his feet (St. Luke x. 39; St. John xi. 32, xii. 3). She humbly worshipped as Lord the rejected of her nation.

In measure at least she understood his mission also. Sitting at his feet, and hearing his word, pondering it, no doubt, in the silence of her spirit, she alone of all his disciples dared to think of his death. Her devotion was a deliberate devotion to a defeated, suffering, dying Messiah. It was the deepest reach of devotion, because it accepted—no doubt without intellectual understanding, but with a glorious, spiritual trust—the will and purpose of her Lord.

2. Words could not have told all that this quiet woman longed that he should know of her gratitude, reverence, sympathy, and of the love which would outlive death and the grave. Therefore, her offering must speak for her. It was costly, which was a small matter; only utilitarians regard cost. It was deliberate, which mattered very much; long and tender

thought had been given to this symbolic confession of her faith. It was most delicate, most gracious; long afterwards it was remembered that 'the house was filled with the odour.'

Such an offering as this was rare, and Jesus made plain for all future generations of His disciples that the response of a pure love is beyond all things precious to him. 'He, she, does much who loves much.'

For Thought and Prayer.

It never was more important than now that we should cultivate 'the spirit sense,' realise the spiritual relationships, and know the spiritual communion concerning which the closing passages of this book have so much to say. Let us meditate once again with this intention chapters xiv.–xvi.

'I am that maketh thee to love; I am that maketh thee to long.'

THE EPILOGUE

(Chapter xxi.)

Approaches.

When thou turn'st away from ill,
Christ is this side of thy hill.
When thou turn'st towards good,
Christ is walking in thy wood.
When thy heart says, Father, pardon,
Then the Lord is in thy garden.
When stern duty wakes to watch,
Then his hand is on the latch.
But when hope thy song doth rouse,
Then the Lord is in thy house.
When to love is all thy wit,
Christ doth at thy table sit.
When God's will is thy heart's pole,
Then is Christ thy very soul.

George MacDonald.

I. Simon—Peter (xxi. 1–23).

'Love.' 'Serve.' 'Follow.'

Notes.

'I go a fishing.' Simon was restless. He had been present upon at least two occasions when their Lord had met his disciples; and he had probably found some private opportunity of pouring out his sorrow and penitence at Jesus' feet, and of hearing a word of forgiveness. But if this were a time of suspense, of transition, with the other apostles, it must have been much more so with Simon. Jesus had more to say than had yet been said, and Simon knew it.

1. It is not good to build large structures of teaching upon slender foundations of mere words and phrases, but every word of Jesus in this divine Epilogue is golden.

'Simon son of John'—still the old Simon, under the dominion of the nature inherited, we may conjecture, from his father John—'Lovest thou me?' The emphasis is upon the verb, the force of which is lost in the English translation.

'Lovest thou me with reverence, more than the others?' 'Yes, Lord, thou knowest that thou art very dear to me' (15).

'Lovest thou me with reverence?' 'Yea, Lord, thou knowest thou art very dear to me' (16).

'Am I very dear to thee?' 'Yes, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that thou art very dear to me.'

Once it had been easy to make loud protestations, now he ventured no further than his experience warranted; and Jesus, infinitely patient, accepted meantime of the kind of love which this new and Christian Peter in his humility was prepared to render. But the twice-repeated appeal to the higher love was a demand for the higher love. Jesus asked of the restored apostle nothing less than the love of worship and reverence.

2. 'Feed.' 'Tend.' 'Feed.' Love, if real, will infallibly rise to service. It is so with every true human love. In the case of the Lord, who for the great love wherewith he loved Peter had forgiven his awful sin, the offered service was not only the sign of forgiveness, it was a reminder of the inevitable fruit of love. No gladness could ever come to Peter so great as the gladness of service, however and wherever his Lord should claim it. The overflowings of his repentance and his love towards him would be poured forth upon the 'sheep' and the 'wee lambs' which were his.

3. 'Follow me.' 'When thou wert young'—in the days of Simon—'thou girdedst thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.' In the experience of Peter there was an accepted cross, and a following both to prison and to death.

Such love, service, following, were surely not too much for this forgiven soul to render to him who had no reproaches even for so base a denial.

4. The Epilogue is very probably from another

hand than that of the original author, in which case we may venture to surmise a reason for the addition. The Master had, during Passion Week, pressed upon the disciples the teaching of the mystical relationship which must thereafter become the true relationship between him and them.

'My friends, love ye me henceforth with the silent worshipful love of the Spirit.'

'Yea, Lord, thou knowest that we love thee dearly, and would have thee with us always.'

But the Challenge of the Higher Love held.

Was there danger that when filled with the Spirit, and rejoicing in the freedom wherewith their Lord had set them free, they might at some future time become mere transcendentalists, and forget their working Commission? And did the wise writer of the Epilogue add as a parable of their Lord, the beautiful Petrine tradition as a most tender and holy warning? It may well be so. For the life of the Christian, like the life of their Lord, is upon two planes; and the balance must be held.

The world must know that he is in the Father, and they in him. And they must feed, and tend, and feed again, his sheep and lambs.

For Thought and Prayer.

Love—Service—Following. These are the essentials of the Christian's response to Christ. Let us therefore meditate—with this passage and our present need to guide us—upon each in turn. What is the *love* required of us, what the *service*, what the *following?*

'May the fiery and sweet strength of thy love, I pray thee, absorb my soul, and make all things under heaven as nothing unto me, that for love of thy love I may die, as thou didst deign to die for love of mine.'

II. The Author, and His Last Word (xxi. 24, 25).

'We beheld his glory.'
'The things which are written.'
'The things which are not written.'

Notes.

1. This book bears no signature. The only personal word is a note added by another hand than that of the author. The writer literally effaces himself; and the most impressive fact of his magnificent self-effacement is his silence regarding feelings which must have been to a disciple of Jesus very poignant; he expresses neither his sympathy with the suffering of Jesus, nor the indignation which must have burned within him against his enemies. He reserves alike his love and his wrath, and leaves a history written with an absolute detachment, to produce its own effect. 'We beheld his glory' is the nearest approach to a personal reference. John is pre-eminently the author who conceals himself behind his subject.

2. But there is no question that the book is written *from within*. It is the result of a long life of spiritual fellowship and of silent meditation; the

writer knew the very heart of Jesus, and read the inner meaning of each word and act which he chronicles, and had lost all impression of wonder or of mystery. Jesus lives in these pages: a Man, meek and mighty, gentle and assured, pitiful and righteous, full of grace and truth; but a Man unknown, obscure, rejected. On the other hand, a place alone and supreme is inferred as of right his, in human history, in the Universe, in God. John takes us by the hand, opens doors, lifts veils, leads onward unfalteringly, until we find ourselves in the very Presence Chamber of the Holy One.

3. 'Even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.' Hence the overwhelming interest which attaches to the choice of 'the things which *are* written.' The end of the book is that the Man Jesus should be recognised and accepted, worshipped and loved, as the Son, the Word, of God; and yet the very slender thread of history which runs through it is an almost unbroken story of doubt and rejection; and ends in defeat and a cross. The darkness deepens chapter by chapter, and one chapter only is devoted to the final victory.

But, as we have seen, the historic record is not in any true sense the content—'the things written'—of the book. The things written are the 'I am'—the claim, and the 'Ye must'—the challenge, of Jesus; and of the eternal significance of these the writer is in no doubt.

4. Quite as significant of his purpose and method are 'the things which are *not* written in this book.' There is a marked reserve in the Fourth Gospel, a

strict adherence to plan, and careful choice and adaptation of material to plan. 'A sentence suffices him for the most stupendous event in the world's story.'

5. Among the unwritten things is one which is in its omission peculiarly suggestive. There is no account of the institution of the Holy Supper, that continuous symbol of the mystical relation between our Lord and his disciples. When we think of it, there was no need. It would be difficult to suppose that the sacred hour of that first Communion Service was for one moment absent from the writer's thoughts as he wrote. For this is indeed the Sacramental Gospel. The whole book is devoted to the gradual elucidation of the fact that to be in relation with Christ is to be spiritually at-one with him who is all and in all.

The sacramental nature of the meal eaten in fellowship taught that we are, as a modern mystic has said, 'to regard everything in life spiritually.' 'The material appearance is not to trouble us, but nothing, however small, in the material world, is to escape our spiritual discernment of it.'

The Sonhood of our Lord Godwards and manwards, upon which all relationships depend; the symbolism of the 'I ams' from which the earliest simple 'Bread' to the 'Vine,' which is the true and final image of spiritual oneness; the 'I am' itself, which reveals the satisfying truth that within the mystical communion is the gracious, glorious fellowship of a Heart of Love, heart with Heart; all of this is but an interpretation of the Act whereby the

Church, which is the Community of the followers of Jesus, 'enfolds herself in his life and death,' 'until he come.'

For Prayer.

'We rejoice that the highways of the Spirit have their reflections even here, and that in the loveliness of giving and receiving we read the secret of all holy fellowship in heaven and on earth. Be it to all thy servants for strength and for guidance upon our difficult way.'

'Speak, thou availing Christ, and fill this pause.'

THE END

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